

Issues Relating to the Step Ahead Comprehensive Early Childhood Grant Program

May 1998

Human Resources or Economic
Security Matters Evaluation Committee

Indiana Legislative Services Agency

Legislative Evaluation and Oversight

The Office of Fiscal and Management Analysis is a Division within the Legislative Services Agency that performs fiscal, budgetary and management analysis. Within this office teams of program analysts evaluate state agency programs and activities as set forth in IC 2-5-21.

The goal of Legislative Evaluation and Oversight is to improve the legislative decision-making process and, ultimately, state government operations by providing information about the performance of state agencies and programs through evaluation.

The evaluation teams prepare reports for the Legislative Council in accordance with IC 2-5-21-9. The published reports describe state programs, analyze management problems, evaluate outcomes, and include other items as directed by the Legislative Evaluation and Oversight Policy Subcommittee of the Legislative Council. The report is used by an evaluation committee to determine the need for legislative action.

Office of Fiscal and Management Analysis

James D. Mundt, Director
Diane Powers, Deputy Director

Donna Almon, Receptionist
Bernadette Bartlett, Team Member
Kristin Breen
Mark Bucherl
Alan Gossard, Team Leader
Mark Goodpaster
Beverly Holloway
Dave Hoppmann
Phyllis McCormack, Office Manager
Susan Preble
Ron Sobecki, Author, This Report
Robert J. Sigalow
James P. Sperlik

Preface

Each year, the Legislative Services Agency prepares reports for the Legislative Council in accordance with IC 2-5-21. In accordance with Legislative Council Resolution 15-96, this report concerns issues relating to the Step Ahead Program. It has been prepared for use by the Human Resources or Economic Security Matters Evaluation Committee.

We gratefully acknowledge all those who assisted in the preparation of this report.

Staff contact and general correspondence:

Ron Sobecki
Indiana Legislative Services Agency
200 W. Washington St., Ste. 302
Indianapolis, IN 46204
(317) 232-9854

Copies of this report may be obtained from:

Legislative Information Center
Indiana Legislative Services Agency
200 W. Washington St., Suite 230
Indianapolis, IN 46204
(317) 232-9856

Summary of the Step Ahead Program Evaluation.

Public Law 34-1991 established the Comprehensive Early Childhood Grant Program, known as Step Ahead, to streamline human service delivery systems for families and children at the state and local level and to facilitate communication and collaboration among local service providers, state and local agency representatives, and community leaders. The Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) oversees the implementation of Step Ahead. By 1992, all 92 counties had established Step Ahead councils. Consumers, advocates, local clinics, shelters, providers, government officials, and business and community leaders were encouraged to participate.

State Funding for Step Ahead. Annual state appropriations for Step Ahead equaled \$3.683 million in FY96 and FY97 and \$3.687 million in FY98. In FY98, \$1,227,191 was allocated to local Step Ahead councils for planning and coordination. In FY98, \$1,100,001 in discretionary grants was awarded to implement county plans. The State Office allocated \$775,333 in FY98 to pre-school pilot programs and \$265,000 to Healthy Families Indiana. In FY98, \$25,000 was transferred to the Indiana Head Start Collaboration Project which assists in the development of multi-agency and public-private partnerships.

Federal Funds. Each council, in partnership with the state and local governments, plans and coordinates the use of certain federal funds that are distributed to local entities: the federal Family Preservation and Support Services Program provided \$3.8 million to local entities from August 1997 through July 1998. The federal Child Care Development Fund provided \$3.8 million in FFY97. Step Ahead councils planned for the use of some of the \$2.1 million in federal First Steps Early Intervention System funding in FFY98.

INSIGHTS Evaluation of Step Ahead. FSSA contracted with INSIGHTS, independent consultants, to evaluate Step Ahead. INSIGHTS recommended that the State:

- establish a clear vision, mission, outcome goals, objectives, and benchmarks for Step Ahead; provide quality training, technical assistance, and financial support to local councils; provide skilled and knowledgeable consultants for each county for at least one year; lessen requirements and eliminate unreasonable time lines, paperwork, and bureaucracy; develop policies and procedures to promote flexibility and innovation; and develop strategies, actions, benchmarks, and assessments with local councils.

INSIGHTS recommended that local councils:

- engage parents and families in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of Step Ahead; enhance involvement of business, industry, and civic leaders; extend partnerships to create a more seamless, comprehensive delivery system; establish external review panels; develop strategies with local communities to prevent council member burnout; and establish clear focuses, priorities, and attainable goals.

INSIGHTS recommended that the State and local councils:

- increase efforts to measure outcomes of early childhood initiatives and blend child care funding streams to eliminate or reduce funding lapses resulting from the intermittent distribution of block grant dollars.

FSSA's Response to the INSIGHTS Evaluation. The FSSA is re-organizing in order to enhance the Step Ahead process. FSSA personnel plan to reaffirm the Step Ahead mission; work with local councils to establish program benchmarks and performance outcomes; strengthen local council development; implement more training and technical assistance for local councils; and make available state planning consultants.

Survey by Cooperative Extension Services. The Cooperative Extension Service (CES), a three-way partnership between federal, state, and local governments based at Purdue University, maintains an office in each county and received \$47,545 from Step Ahead in 1996. Each CES office received a survey from CES administrators in January 1997. Most of the responding counties cited the opportunity to meet and share with other professionals and agencies to address the needs of the community in a collaborative atmosphere as the strength of the local councils. Weaknesses included poor attendance at council meetings, too few people controlling the councils, and short turnaround time for grants and proposals. The overall impression was that in most counties Step Ahead was working well -- better in some counties than others -- but overall things were being accomplished that were not prior to Step Ahead.

Step Ahead Performance Indicators. Each county identifies goals and objectives and determines which projects will be funded. The variety of goals and objectives as well as the variety of resources available to the 92 counties make an overall statewide assessment of the Step Ahead process difficult.

Changes in the following key indicators may be useful in evaluating Step Ahead: the number of child care centers and child care homes; the number of abuse and neglect cases; and the number of children receiving intervention services.

The number of licensed child care centers as well as the capacity at these centers have increased statewide. In 1991, 628 licensed child care centers existed in Indiana with a capacity of 49,499 children. By 1997, 647 licensed child care centers existed with a capacity of 55,907. In 1991, 1,910 child care homes maintained a capacity of 15,290. In 1997, 2,825 licensed child care homes had a capacity of 32,574. The number of reported cases of child abuse and neglect has declined. In 1991, 32,284 cases of child abuse and neglect were reported. In 1997, 18,104 were reported. In 1991, 2,591 children received early intervention services, and by 1997, 8,856 children received such services.

A change in a key indicator, especially on a statewide level, cannot be solely attributed to Step Ahead. Socio-demographic factors, economic performance statewide and locally, and a host of other factors can influence the indicators. Statewide numbers also mask individual county successes. However, the indicators do provide some quantitative evidence of changes in services for families and children. These changes may be a result of many factors but may also be due, in part, to the performance of local Step Ahead councils.

Are Statutory Goals Being Met? Although this report does not address all of the statutory goals as outlined in IC 20-1-1.8-12, a general review indicated that the State and local councils were meeting some of the statutory mandates. Some counties appeared to have greater success than others. Unfortunately, no comprehensive, objective data are available at the state level that measures local Step Ahead success at meeting goals specified in statute or in rule. The State Step Ahead Office does, however, issue annual reports that lists accomplishments for individual counties.

The State annual reports, as well as a survey conducted by the Legislative Services Agency (LSA), suggest that numerous goals are being met. Step Ahead councils were required by the State to identify funding sources and programs available within the counties. The State Step Ahead Office has provided information on federal and state funding sources. Between 1991 and 1996, Step Ahead has mobilized over \$24 million in additional funds for counties to serve children and families.

Of 65 counties responding to an LSA survey, 61% listed projects that had used new funding sources identified

through Step Ahead. Funding streams were blended for numerous projects. Rural, less populated counties appeared to have some difficulty in blending funding streams due to a general lack of financial resources available. In certain counties, Step Ahead encouraged coordination and cooperation among programs, discouraged duplication of services, and provided comprehensive, countywide programs.

Local Council Governance Policies. The INSIGHTS evaluation indicated that service providers who serve on local councils could, at worst, decide who will receive funding or, at least, influence the direction of the local councils. In response, the State requires each local council to establish a conflict of interest policy to govern the actions of persons engaged in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of Step Ahead. The State also requires a consumer comment policy to allow those involved to raise concerns about services coordinated through Step Ahead. Local councils are also required to adopt and implement an appeals procedure.

Role of the Local Council: Planning Versus Administration. With an increasing number of programs for which the local councils are responsible, the councils appear to be losing their planning focus. Responses from the coordinators to the LSA survey revealed that counties spend a significant amount of time on administrative activities as opposed to planning activities.

Volunteer Burnout and Overlap with Other Community Planning Efforts. Local councils are composed primarily of volunteers. Overuse of volunteers, particularly in less populated counties, poses a serious threat. Some overlap exists between local Step Ahead councils and other local planning efforts involved with Indiana's welfare reform initiative. Allowing local planning efforts to combine could reduce volunteer burnout and eliminate duplication of efforts.

Step Ahead is a process that has continually evolved since its inception in 1992. The local councils have become an important entity in providing local planning and decision-making. Success at the local level varies and depends to a large degree on the local coordinator and the council members. At the state level, continued success of the Step Ahead process will depend on strong support at the highest levels of state government.

Table of Contents

The Step Ahead Process	1
Overview of Step Ahead.....	1
History of Step Ahead.....	1
Statutory Goals of Step Ahead.....	1
The Mission and Vision Statements of Step Ahead	2
Step Ahead Mission Statement	2
Step Ahead Vision Statement.....	2
Implementation of Step Ahead at the State Level	2
The Step Ahead Panel.....	2
State Step Ahead Office.....	3
Program Consultants.....	3
Early Initiatives to Implement Step Ahead.....	4
Indiana Collaboration Project.....	4
Indiana Policy Council for Children and Families.....	4
Working Group.....	4
County-State Facilitators	4
Step Ahead at the Local Level.....	4
Step Ahead Councils	4
Powers and Duties of Local Step Ahead Councils	5
Roles and Responsibilities of Local Step Ahead Councils.....	5
Membership of Local Step Ahead Councils	5
Local Step Ahead Coordinator	5
Local Step Ahead Voucher Agent	6
State Funding Through Step Ahead	6
Step Ahead Planning and Coordination Grants.....	6
Step Ahead Discretionary Funds	6
Step Ahead Funding for Preschool Pilot Projects	7
Step Ahead Funding for Indiana Head Start Collaboration Project.....	7
Funding for the Healthy Families Indiana Program.....	7
Child Care Development Fund	12
Family Preservation Program	14
First Steps.....	15
Prior Evaluation of Step Ahead.....	16
INSIGHTS Evaluation	16
Collaboration Between the State and Local Step Ahead Councils	16
Coordination Between Local Councils and Local Communities.....	17
Development and Coordination of New and/or Expanded Partnerships and Service Systems.....	17
Local Step Ahead Council Development.....	18
Early Childhood Development	19
Recommendations of the INSIGHTS Evaluation of Step Ahead	20
FSSA'S Response to the INSIGHTS Evaluation.....	21
Survey by Cooperative Extension Services	21
Step Ahead Issues and Options	22
Step Ahead Performance Indicators	22
Are Statutory Goals Being Met?	23
Statutory Intent of Step Ahead.....	25
Local Council Responsibilities	25
Issues Pertaining to Local Council Governing Policies	28
Conflict of Interest Policies.....	28
Consumer Comment Policies.....	28
Appeals Policies.....	28
Other Issues.....	30
Training for Regional Voucher and/or Fiscal Agents	30
Role of the Local Council: Planning Versus Administration.....	30
Overlap with Other Community Planning Efforts.....	31
Funding for the Step Ahead Process	31
Can Step Ahead Accomplishments Be Achieved By Other Means?.....	32
Summary	32
References.....	33
Appendices.....	34

The Step Ahead Process

Public Law (P.L.) 34-1991 established Step Ahead, a process designed to coordinate and streamline human service delivery systems at the state and local level. This report examines the progress that Step Ahead has made toward fulfilling its statutory goals.

This paper is divided into three major sections. The first section describes the history and structure of the Step Ahead process at both the state and county level. Statutory guidelines and various programs and funding streams associated with Step Ahead are also described.

The second section provides an overview of a recent evaluation of the Step Ahead process conducted by independent consultants under contract with the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA). The consultants focused on the Step Ahead process in seven counties.

The third section identifies and discusses issues and options relating to Step Ahead.

Overview of Step Ahead

History of Step Ahead. In 1990, Andersen Consulting, under contract with the executive branch, completed *Vision for the Future*, a study of human service delivery systems in Indiana. In 1990 and 1991, the Indiana Legislative Services Agency (LSA), in response to Public Law 13-1989, completed a series of reports that focused on services provided to senior citizens, the disabled, and children.¹ Both the Andersen report as well as the LSA series found that human service delivery in Indiana suffered from fragmented services; duplication of services; and a lack of centralized policy, planning, budgeting, evaluation, and research. Subsequent to these studies, P.L. 9-1991 reorganized the state agencies involved and brought them under the purview of the

newly created Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA)

Step Ahead followed the FSSA reorganization. In 1991, Governor Evan Bayh presented the Step Ahead Initiative in his State of the State address. The program was developed to create a comprehensive statewide service integration system for children and families. The program was designed to facilitate communication and collaboration among local service providers, state and local agency representatives, and community leaders. The Indiana General Assembly passed P.L. 34-1991, establishing the Step Ahead process.

Statutory Goals of Step Ahead. IC 20-1-1.8-12 defines the goals of Step Ahead, which are summarized below:

- To identify and reorganize the various programs available in each county at federal, state, local, and private levels.
- To encourage coordination and cooperation among the eligible programs and to discourage duplication of services.
- To provide comprehensive programs to all eligible children countywide.
- To recognize the service needs of and unique resources available to particular counties, develop those into statewide resource listings, and to allow for flexibility in program implementation.
- To prevent or minimize the potential for developmental delay in children before the children reach the age of compulsory school attendance.
- To enhance certain federally funded eligible programs.
- To strengthen the family unit through
 - (a) Encouraging parental involvement in a child's development and education.
 - (b) Preventing disruptive employment conditions for employed parents.
 - (c) Enhancing the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their children.
- To reduce the educational costs to society by reducing the need for special education services after children reach school age.
- To assure that children with disabilities, when appropriate, are integrated into programs available to children who are not disabled.

¹Long-term Care and the Elderly, May 1990; Mental Health Needs, June 1990; Children with Special Needs, June 1990; Families in Poverty, June 1990; Adults with Disabilities, July 1990; Long-term Care and Local Service Delivery, May 1991; Families in Poverty and Local Service Delivery, July 1991; Adults with Disabilities and Local Service Delivery, October 1991; Mental Health Needs and Local Service Delivery, September 1991; Service Integration and Recommendations for Change, November 1991; and Children with Special Needs and Local Service Delivery, October 1991.

- Beginning in 2000, to ensure that every child who enrolls in kindergarten has benefited since birth from programs available under Step Ahead.

The Mission and Vision Statements of Step Ahead

Step Ahead Mission Statement. Step Ahead is a coordinated effort that allows children and families the opportunity to reach their full potential (FSSA, 1995).

Step Ahead Vision Statement. Step Ahead is to provide a statewide, comprehensive, seamless service delivery system for children, birth to thirteen, in Indiana, ensuring accessibility, affordability, and quality. The Step Ahead staff shall develop incentives and resources for the development of collaborative service networks that will increase efficiency, diminish redundancy, and eliminate gaps in services.

Implementation of Step Ahead at the State Level

The Step Ahead Panel. P.L. 34-1991 established the Step Ahead Panel to oversee the implementation of Step Ahead. The Panel consists of :

- Six members appointed by the Governor from the following state agencies:
 - (A) Division of Mental Health
 - (B) State Department of Health
 - (C) Division of Family and Children
 - (D) State Budget Agency
 - (E) Division of Aging and Rehabilitative Services
 - (F) Department of Education
 - (G) Executive staff of the Lt. Governor with knowledge in the area of employment and training programs
 - (H) Executive staff of the Governor
- Five members appointed by the Governor from the private sector knowledgeable in early childhood development.
- Four members appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction knowledgeable in early childhood education.
- (6) Monitor the implementation of Step Ahead,

The chairman of the Panel shall be appointed by the Governor from outside the membership of the Panel as described above. (Panel membership as of November 1997 is provided in Appendix 1.)

IC 20-1-1.8-17 sets out the powers and duties of the Step Ahead Panel, which are summarized below:

(1) Establish guidelines to implement the process to comply with federal regulations governing the distribution of the Child Care Development Block Grant. Guidelines are to include:

- (A) The content of the application and proposal.
- (B) Types of eligible early childhood programs.
- (C) Parental income eligibility standards.
- (D) A schedule for awarding coordination and implementation grants and the criteria used to award those grants. Criteria must include:
 - (i) The degree to which available eligible programs are coordinated within the county under the proposal.
 - (ii) The extent of community commitment.
 - (iii) The relative need.
 - (iv) The extent to which multiple eligible programs and services are co-located throughout the county, including public schools.
 - (v) The extent to which school corporations cooperate in the initiatives.
 - (vi) The quality reflected by comprehensive programming for preschool services and the commitment to consistent staff training opportunities.
 - (vii) The extent to which proposed programs provide integrated programs for children.

- (E) Any restrictions on Step Ahead grants.
- (F) Reporting requirements of grant recipients to the Step Ahead county coordinator.
- (G) The distribution of federal funds and other available funds.

(2) Develop minimum standards for eligible programs.

- (3) Review applications for coordination grants and proposals for implementation grants.
- (4) Approve proposals that comply with standards.
- (5) Conduct assessments of Step Ahead programs.

encourage collaboration through the department's

Early Childhood Division to promote consistency in state efforts for young children, and report to the Governor on its implementation.

(7) Any other task to facilitate the implementation of Step Ahead activities.

The State Step Ahead Panel approves the State Step Ahead Action Plan on an annual basis. The Panel also approves the annual planning/coordination grant and discretionary grant requests for funds. The Panel also approves policy as it relates to the Step Ahead process.

State Step Ahead Office. The State Step Ahead Office was established to provide statewide guidance for the Step Ahead process. Initially the Office was located in the Bureau of Child Development within the Division of Family and Children. In October 1993, the Step Ahead administration moved from the Bureau of Child Development to the Secretary of FSSA. In 1997, the Step Ahead administration was placed within FSSA's newly created Office of Community Planning within the Division of Contract Management. The Office of Community Planning expanded local planning and partnership building to include Step Ahead, Indiana Building Bright Beginnings, the Indiana Head Start Collaboration Project, as well as additional community planning and support, and contract management for all of FSSA's divisions.

The Step Ahead Office personnel direct, support, monitor, implement, and evaluate the Step Ahead process at the state level. The Office provides training, technical assistance, and monthly mailings to the local Step Ahead councils which include training schedules for coordinators, information on Indiana's open-door law, grant opportunities, and other information that may be of interest to the councils. Other state agencies, as well as other entities, also utilize the Step Ahead mailings to provide information to the communities. The Office also provides staff support to the Step Ahead Panel.

The Step Ahead Office is responsible for notifying the local Step Ahead coordinators of the quarterly statewide coordinator meetings held in Indianapolis. The agenda for these meetings is developed by the coordinators. Topics vary with each meeting; however, examples of topics discussed at these meetings include:

- (1) the role of Step Ahead councils;
- (2) Child Care Development Fund updates;
- (3) Step Ahead council member orientation; and
- (4) Family Preservation Support grant time lines and planning.

Attendance at coordinator meetings has ranged from 31 to 56 counties represented during meetings in 1996 and 1997. Average attendance during this time period was 42 counties.

Program Consultants. Each of the agencies responsible for funding programs (Office of Community Planning, Bureau of Family Protection and Preservation, and the Bureau of Child Development) have a number of program consultants. The Office of Community Planning consultants are the only state staff that spends 100% of their time on the Step Ahead process, which includes working with other local and state entities to further expand the infrastructure for community planning. Those program consultants in the Bureau of Child Development and Bureau of Family Protection and Preservation provide program expertise for the development of requests for specific program dollars. These program consultants spend the majority of their time providing program technical assistance and training to councils and the contractual entities who receive the funding and administer the programs. They also work closely with the Step Ahead councils to ensure appropriate utilization of the process to implement the programs. The number of program personnel by office that administers the Step Ahead programs is described in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1. Technical Support Staff at FSSA.	
Office	No. of Staff
Office of Community Planning	6
Bureau of Child Development	
Educare Consultants	10
First Steps Consultants	6
Contract Staff	5
Family Protection and Preservation	
Family Preservation Consultant	1
Total	28
Source: FSSA	

Early Initiatives to Implement Step Ahead

Indiana Collaboration Project. In 1994, Governor Evan Bayh initiated the Indiana Collaboration Project (ICP). The purpose of the ICP was to extend the Step Ahead process to state and federal levels of government in an attempt to streamline funding mechanisms and requirements. Its purpose was also to link planning at the local level with state and federal planning. At the federal level, six agencies (Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and Labor) formed a regional team assigned to the ICP to facilitate the Step Ahead process.

To help accomplish this in the initial years of the Step Ahead process, the Indiana Policy Council for Children and Families, the Working Group, and the County-State Facilitators were established. However, as of April 1998, these entities were no longer meeting. For a historical perspective, a brief description of the groups and their purpose follows.

Indiana Policy Council for Children and Families. The Indiana Policy Council for Children and Families (IPC), chaired by the Governor, consisted of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; the Attorney General; the Directors of the State Budget Agency and Personnel Department; the Secretary of FSSA; and the Commissioners of the Departments of Agriculture, Correction, Health, Higher Education, and Workforce Development. The purpose of the Council was to facilitate state and local collaboration. Barriers to collaboration were referred to the Policy Council for the Council to address.

The IPC also approved the Working Group state policy and procedure recommendations. For example, in 1994, the IPC approved policy ICP 94-2 concerning problem solving. That policy directed the resolution of problems first at the local level through the assistance of county/state facilitators. The Working Group (described below) solved problems brought to it by the facilitators. If the problems were cross-agency or system-wide, the Working Group forwarded recommendations to the Policy Council for approval. Other examples of policy Step Ahead Councils. With the passage of the Step Ahead legislation, each of the 92 counties in Indiana were given an opportunity to participate in the Step Ahead process and to convene a local council. By the spring of

decisions passed by the IPC included a communications policy about the availability of funds for family and children at the county level, a policy to create a common intake/release of information form, and a plan to pool administrative dollars.

Working Group. The Working Group consisted of employees from state agencies that participated in the Indiana Collaboration Project who facilitated policy and procedural development as identified by the local Step Ahead councils and state employees. The Working Group was responsible for making recommendations to the Indiana Policy Council concerning state policy and procedure recommendations that were an outgrowth of working with county-state facilitators.

County-State Facilitators. The county-state facilitator was a state employee who devoted 15%-25% of his or her time facilitating state and local collaboration to resolve issues identified by local councils. The following state agencies had county-state facilitators: the Departments of Correction, Education, Health, and Workforce Development; and the FSSA Divisions of Disability, Aging, and Rehabilitative Services; Family and Children, and Mental Health. Approximately 53 state employees served as county-state facilitators. The purpose of the facilitator was to aid the county Step Ahead council in the identification and removal of barriers to the implementation of the local plan.

These three groups are no longer functioning. The Human Resource Investment Council (HRIC) will now function in a role similar to the Indiana Policy Council for Children and Families. The HRIC consists of agency heads and persons from business and non-profit organizations. Their role is one of a broad strategic umbrella group responsible for problem-solving and organizing Indiana's human investment strategies into a single long-term strategy for Indiana. The HRIC has not met yet to determine what, if any, entities will be developed to help take over the role of the Indiana Policy Council for Children and Families.

Step Ahead at the Local Level

1992, all 92 counties had formally established Step Ahead councils. In order to establish a council, each county identified a convener who would ensure that key local players were invited to the discussions about the

development of the councils. The State Step Ahead Office suggested that the convener be a United Way agency; a Community Action Against Poverty agency; a school corporation; or a cooperative extension office. Conveners were to be committed to the needs of children and families; have an understanding of group process skills; and be a leader with the ability to network and mobilize. Once a convener was chosen, individuals and/or agencies were invited to discuss council membership.

FSSA directed that eight entities had to be included in the development of the core Step Ahead councils: (1) county health departments; (2) First Steps coordinating councils; (3) Head Start agencies; (4) private industry councils; (5) public schools; (6) Women-Infant-Children clinics; (7) the Division of Family and Children; and (8) consumers. Other suggested invitees included businesses; local chambers of commerce; child care providers; city and/or county government officials; legislators; family violence shelter staff, etc. Once these organizations convened, a coordinator and a fiscal agent were selected.

Powers and Duties of Local Step Ahead Councils. Indiana Administrative Code (IAC) 3-2-3 describes the powers and duties of local Step Ahead councils, which are summarized below:

- (A) To plan, develop, implement, design, and evaluate a comprehensive local system of service delivery for children and families.
- (B) May identify available local, state, and federal funds in addition to the funds appropriated by the General Assembly to assist in the implementation of the service delivery.
- (C) May arrange to use available funds to enhance and expand direct services.
- (D) Act as fiscal agent and apply for grants or enter into contracts.

Roles and Responsibilities of Local Step Ahead Councils. IAC 3-2-4 defines the roles and responsibilities of the local Step Ahead councils, which

Exhibit 2. Local Council Member Affiliation.	
Step Ahead Local Council Membership Affiliation	Percent of Membership
Non-Profit Agency	24.8%
City/County Government	18.3%

are summarized below:

- (A) Identify the needs of the county as they relate to children and families.
- (B) Identify present and prospective resources and services available to children and families.
- (C) Act as a liaison between public and private resources.
- (D) Facilitate coordination among agencies serving the needs of children and families.
- (E) Facilitate local service delivery programs.
- (F) Streamline funding mechanisms.
- (G) Exchange information with other councils, the community, and agencies serving the needs of children and families.
- (H) Develop and implement a strategic plan and an annual plan.
- (J) Develop a data collection system for services and populations.
- (K) Encourage public participation.

Membership of Local Step Ahead Councils. Membership on the local Step Ahead councils is addressed by each council in their by-laws. IAC 3-2-5 provides a list of members suggested by the State Panel. The number of members on a particular council ranged from 10 in Ohio County to 203 in Madison County. A profile of the affiliation of council members in each county can be found in Appendix 2. The affiliation of members statewide is summarized in Exhibit 2.

Local Step Ahead Coordinator. Each local Step Ahead council must hire a coordinator to serve as its chief administrative officer. The coordinator is to facilitate the planning, development, implementation, design, and evaluation of the Step Ahead process in the county. Of the 92 Step Ahead councils, only nine have full-time coordinators. The other 83 counties employ part-time coordinators.

Education	13.7%
Parents/Consumers	10.0%
Medical Profession	9.7%
Child Care	9.0%
Special Needs	5.8%

Legal Profession	2.9%
Media/Business	2.6%
Religious	1.9%
Elected Officials	1.3%
Total Statewide	100.0%

Local Step Ahead Voucher Agent. Local Step Ahead councils must have a voucher agent in order to receive funding from the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), a federal program discussed later in this report. The voucher agent administers the CCDF and is responsible for marketing, client eligibility determination, maintenance of a caregiver's directory, parent education, issuance of vouchers, facilitation of caregiver payments, and collection and reporting of statistics. The voucher agent and the fiscal agent may be the same entity. In 45 of 92 counties, the fiscal agents also serve as the voucher agent. (Voucher agents for all counties are listed in Appendix 3.)

State Funding Through Step Ahead

Through FY95, there was an annual appropriation for Step Ahead of \$3.5 million. This was increased to \$3.683 million for each of FY96 and FY97. The appropriation was increased again in FY98 to \$3.687 million. The appropriation is used to provide funding for Step Ahead planning/coordination grants, discretionary grants, preschool pilot projects, the Head Start Collaboration Project, and Healthy Family program. The use of the appropriation is subject to approval by the Step Ahead Panel. A statewide summary of Step Ahead funding for FY98 is provided in Exhibit 3. (Appendix 4 provides a five-year budget history for Step Ahead.)

Exhibit 3. Step Ahead Funding Summary, FY98.

- (2) promote seed money at the local level; and
- (3) provide an opportunity for local success.

According to FSSA, the priorities identified in the county plan of action serve as a basis for the use of these funds by the local Step Ahead council. In FY98, \$1,100,001 in discretionary grants was awarded statewide. A few examples of the use of discretionary funds are provided in Exhibit 4.

Expenditure	FY98	% of Total
Administration *	\$ 487,561	13.2%
Planning/Coordination	1,227,191	33.3%
Discretionary Funds	1,100,001	29.8%
Preschool Pilot Projects	775,333	21.0%
Other	96,990	2.7%
Total Appropriation	\$3,687,076	100.0%
* Includes Transfer to Head Start Collaboration Project \$25,000.		

Step Ahead Planning and Coordination Grants. Planning and/or coordination grants are awarded by the State Step Ahead Office to local Step Ahead councils to fund the planning and development of the Step Ahead process. Each council receives \$10,400 plus an additional amount based on the county's population under age six whose family income is under 100% of the federal poverty guidelines (100% of the FFY98 federal poverty guidelines is \$16,450 for a family of four). In FY98, \$1,227,191 was allocated to local Step Ahead councils for planning and coordination.

Step Ahead Discretionary Funds. State Step Ahead discretionary funds are awarded to counties after a comprehensive needs assessment is completed by a county and an annual county plan of action has been developed. The county plan of action is reviewed by program consultants in the FSSA's Bureau of Child Development.

According to FSSA staff, discretionary grants are to be used to:

- (1) provide an opportunity for the implementation of goals from the county plan of action;

The statewide total allocation of planning/coordination and discretionary funds has remained constant at \$2,327,192 over the four-year period from FY95 through FY98. The amount each county received in planning/coordination grants and discretionary funds is provided in Exhibit 5.

Step Ahead Funding for Preschool Pilot Projects. In addition to the grant programs, the State Step Ahead

Office has allocated \$775,333 of the \$3.687 million Step Ahead appropriation to pre-school pilot programs for FY98. IC 20-10.1-24-3 defines a preschool pilot program as a program that provides a voluntary school readiness program for children who are at least three years of age and are not enrolled in at least kindergarten. Legislation for preschool pilot projects was passed by the General Assembly in 1990 (IC 20-10.1-24). This legislation also included two additional pilot programs for early childhood and latch key programs. The Department of Education was responsible for choosing the school corporations to participate in the pilots.

In 1992, Step Ahead assumed state administrative responsibilities for the preschool pilots. Originally the pilots focused on parent education, preschool activities, and elementary school-age child care. Eligible programs could address internal coordination; external coordination with community agencies; recruitment and retention of target populations; staff development; enhancement of parent-child relationship; and developmental benefits and impacts (FSSA, 1998).

Eighteen preschool pilot programs existed in FY98. Funding to the participating school corporations depended on the completion of a request for funding. Each school corporation wanting to participate worked with the local Step Ahead council to determine the scope of the projects. Funding is passed directly from the state to the participating school corporation. (Appendix 5 lists participating school corporations with their respective grant amounts.)

Step Ahead Funding for Indiana Head Start Collaboration Project. In FY97, \$25,000 was transferred from the Step Ahead appropriation to the Indiana Head Start Collaboration Project. The Head Start Collaboration Project received the transfer in order to provide 50% of the required state match.

Local Step Ahead councils assist in the development of Healthy Families sites. The Bureau of Family Preservation/Protection sends a Request for Funding to the local Step Ahead councils. In most cases a committee of the Step Ahead council makes a determination whether to develop a site. Once the decision to develop a Healthy Families site is made, the local Step Ahead council must determine the local agency that will provide in-take services and in-home visits. Often the local agency will be a health clinic; a Women-Infant-Children clinic; or a local hospital. Once a local agency is identified, the local Step Ahead council receives monthly updates and annual requests for funding from the local entity providing the service. Any funding received through the HFI program

The purpose of the Indiana Head Start Collaboration Project is to create a collaborative Head Start presence at the state level that can assist in the development of multi-agency and public-private partnerships. These partnerships are intended to (1) help build early childhood systems and enhance access to comprehensive services and support for all low-income children; (2) encourage collaboration between Head Start and other appropriate programs, services, and initiatives; and (3) facilitate the involvement of Head Start in state policies, plans, processes, and decisions affecting the Head Start population and other low-income families.

Funding for the Healthy Families Indiana Program. In FY98, Step Ahead provided \$265,000 from the \$3.687 million Step Ahead appropriation to the Healthy Families Indiana (HFI) program to develop HFI sites. Total funding for Healthy Families for FY98 is \$6.9 million. The funding provided to each county is listed in Exhibit 6. Funding for this program includes funds from the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute, TANF, Department of Mental Health, Title XX, the Children's Trust Fund, and local offices of the Division of Family and Children.

The HFI program is a voluntary home-visitation program designed to promote healthy families and healthy children through a variety of services, including child development, access to health care, and parent education. By working closely with hospital maternity wards, prenatal clinics, and referral services, the program identifies families that can benefit from support services. The goal is to reduce child abuse and neglect, childhood health problems, and juvenile delinquency. As of April 1998, 80 counties maintained a HFI program.

goes directly to the local agency and not to the local Step Ahead council.

- Publication of the Family Times newsletter describing programs that are available for families and children in Boone County.
- Provision of articles and brochures on parenting and child care.

DeKalb County Step Ahead Council - About \$13,000 in grants has been awarded to the following six community projects:

- **Children First Center** - To provide scholarships for parents to attend *Redirecting Children's Behavior*, a parenting skills program.
- **Cooperative Extension Service** - To purchase materials for *Have a Healthy Baby Program*, a program targeting prenatal nutritional needs.
- **Child Care Symposium Committee** - To assist with marketing and promotion of *Seek and Demand Quality Child Care* project.
- **Children's First Center** - To extend the *H.O.M.E. Program* for preventing child abuse and neglect.
- **Health and Nutrition Committee** - To continue *Shots for Tots*, a free community immunization program.
- **Campaign for Our Kids** - To support the peer mentoring program that stresses the importance of preventing teen pregnancy.

Marion County Step Ahead Council- Discretionary funds were provided to:

- **Information and Referral Network** - To implement the Marion County Information Services Assessment (MCISA).
- **Voices for Children** - A children's resource center started through the combination of discretionary funds and CCDF Quality funds.

Porter County Step Ahead Council -

- **Healthy Families Program** - Step Ahead is the main source of funding for this program.
- **Ill Child Care in Porter County.**

Scott County Step Ahead Council - Discretionary funds were provided for the following projects:

- Twenty special needs preschool children attended an eight-week Summer Enrichment program at Kids Place.
- Attendance by the director, adult educator, and two teen-parent families to the National Center for Family Literacy Conference. The conference provided methods to enrich the Family Literacy Learning Program in Austin, Indiana.
- **New Hope Child and Family Services, Kids Place** - Received \$5,000 to subsidize child care for low-income teen parents enrolled in the Scott County Family Literacy Program. Eight children and their parents were served.
- 1,000 books were purchased for the Scott County Department of Health and given to children after a visit to the Scott County Children's Health Clinic.

Switzerland County Step Ahead Council -

- **Summer pre-kindergarten program** attended by 60 children. Informal pre- and post-testing indicated easier adjustment to school than those who did not attend.
- **Library summer reading program** with participation of about 100 children. Children earned books as prizes for reading.
- **Cooperative Extension Service - Professor Popcorn Program** attended by about 700 children. Program teaches the food pyramid and USDA nutritional recommendations.
- **Kids Zone Child Care Center** - Funded to meet licensing requirements for infant care. Infant care capacity increased from five to 10.

Exhibit 5. Funding Streams Associated with Step Ahead, FY98.

County	Step Ahead Funds *			CCDF*	Family Preservation Funds*			First Steps *
	Planning-Coord'n	Discretionary Funds	Total		Base Allocation	Required Match	Total Funds	
				Quality Funds				Allocation

Adams	10,400	10,876	21,276	30,116	24,812	8,271	33,083	17,800
Allen	36,721	30,533	67,254	135,426	159,619	53,206	212,825	55,647
Bartholomew	11,514	10,810	22,324	39,465	46,838	15,613	62,451	27,366
Benton	10,400	6,526	16,926	20,517	13,993	4,664	18,657	17,800
Blackford	10,400	7,501	17,901	23,001	17,226	5,742	22,968	17,800
Boone	10,400	7,993	18,393	25,675	27,539	9,180	36,719	17,800
Brown	10,400	6,605	17,005	21,925	15,675	5,225	20,900	17,800
Carroll	10,400	7,149	17,549	22,510	20,730	6,910	27,640	17,800
Cass	10,400	9,769	20,169	32,015	39,672	13,224	52,896	17,800
Clark	14,297	13,919	28,216	56,190	56,427	18,809	75,236	30,000
Clay	10,400	8,716	19,116	28,037	23,877	7,959	31,836	17,800
Clinton	10,400	8,968	19,368	29,988	28,427	9,476	37,903	17,800
Crawford	10,400	7,178	17,578	22,468	22,002	7,334	29,336	17,800
Davies	10,400	10,374	20,774	30,651	23,810	7,937	31,747	17,800
Dearborn	10,400	8,876	19,276	33,985	29,009	9,670	38,679	17,800
Decatur	10,400	8,207	18,607	26,202	32,802	10,934	43,736	17,800
Dekalb	10,400	8,672	19,072	30,216	44,888	14,963	59,851	26,257
Delaware	16,418	18,317	34,735	69,018	120,352	40,117	160,469	30,554
Dubois	10,400	7,540	17,940	27,078	27,324	9,108	36,432	17,800
Elkhart	21,061	18,265	39,326	82,503	95,412	31,804	127,216	30,554
Fayette	10,400	8,061	18,461	28,442	23,625	7,875	31,500	26,395
Floyd	11,703	13,147	24,850	43,515	44,435	14,812	59,247	29,445
Fountain	10,400	7,380	17,780	23,932	16,928	5,643	22,571	17,800
Franklin	10,400	7,631	18,031	24,611	20,552	6,851	27,403	17,800
Fulton	10,400	7,617	18,017	23,244	18,465	6,155	24,620	17,800
Gibson	10,400	9,142	19,542	26,817	30,221	10,074	40,295	17,800
Grant	12,613	14,769	27,382	50,877	48,755	16,252	65,007	24,038
Greene	10,400	9,697	20,097	31,058	27,191	9,064	36,255	17,800
Hamilton	15,078	9,650	24,728	42,592	61,690	20,563	82,253	35,406
Hancock	10,400	7,610	18,010	27,641	35,819	11,940	47,759	17,800
Harrison	10,400	8,105	18,505	31,003	29,668	9,889	39,557	17,800
Hendricks	11,929	7,579	19,508	35,313	54,734	18,245	72,979	26,811
Henry	10,400	12,329	22,729	36,962	32,897	10,966	43,863	17,800
Howard	13,303	16,703	30,006	47,775	50,730	16,910	67,640	24,593
Huntington	10,400	7,428	17,828	29,537	27,053	9,018	36,071	24,454
Jackson	10,400	9,231	19,631	32,938	40,637	13,546	54,183	24,038
Jasper	10,400	7,922	18,322	26,138	24,030	8,010	32,040	17,800
Jay	10,400	8,380	18,780	28,580	24,607	8,202	32,809	17,800
Jefferson	10,400	8,944	19,344	30,820	37,008	12,336	49,344	24,454
Jennings	10,400	9,223	19,623	28,849	24,243	8,081	32,324	17,800
Johnson	14,046	10,904	24,950	42,935	59,262	19,754	79,016	24,593
Knox	10,400	10,563	20,963	34,836	42,006	14,002	56,008	17,800

Exhibit 5. Funding Streams Associated with Step Ahead, FY98.

County	Step Ahead Funds *			CCDF*	Family Preservation Funds*			First Steps *
	Planning-Coord'n	Discretionary Funds	Total		Base Allocation	Required Match	Total Funds	
Kosciusko	12,144	9,476	21,620	41,824	49,827	16,609	66,436	26,395
Lagrange	10,400	9,512	19,912	31,735	32,510	10,837	43,347	17,800
Lake	54,556	73,222	127,778	271,273	261,657	87,219	348,876	53,567
LaPorte	16,059	15,987	32,046	59,364	61,424	20,475	81,899	28,475
Lawrence	10,400	10,449	20,849	34,592	34,329	11,443	45,772	17,800
Madison	17,593	23,480	41,073	71,000	76,302	25,434	101,736	34,020
Marion	102,685	104,610	207,295	386,186	315,223	105,074	420,297	90,860
Marshall	10,400	9,451	19,851	34,448	29,929	9,976	39,905	17,800
Martin	10,400	7,089	17,489	21,429	15,604	5,201	20,805	17,800
Miami	10,400	10,326	20,726	38,481	27,144	9,048	36,192	17,800
Monroe	12,870	14,770	27,640	51,237	62,928	20,976	83,904	30,416
Montgomery	10,400	8,798	19,198	28,237	36,523	12,174	48,697	17,800
Morgan	10,608	9,014	19,622	38,027	38,968	12,989	51,957	23,900
Newton	10,400	7,007	17,407	23,369	20,080	6,693	26,773	17,800
Noble	10,400	9,055	19,455	34,193	28,089	9,363	37,452	25,425
Ohio	10,400	6,305	16,705	18,491	17,206	5,735	22,941	17,800
Orange	10,400	8,361	18,761	27,194	20,184	6,728	26,912	17,800
Owen	10,400	8,352	18,752	24,664	38,801	12,934	51,735	17,800
Parke	10,400	7,378	17,778	23,048	20,927	6,976	27,903	17,800
Perry	10,400	7,654	18,054	24,935	22,086	7,362	29,448	17,800
Pike	10,400	7,493	17,893	21,545	21,577	7,192	28,769	17,800
Porter	19,490	12,503	31,993	55,722	63,363	21,121	84,484	30,693
Posey	10,400	7,858	18,258	26,438	20,942	6,981	27,923	17,800
Pulaski	10,400	6,945	17,345	21,337	15,437	5,146	20,583	17,800
Putnam	10,400	8,172	18,572	28,796	23,780	7,927	31,707	23,207
Randolph	10,400	8,652	19,052	30,052	21,950	7,317	29,267	17,800
Ripley	10,400	8,502	18,902	27,250	26,588	8,863	35,451	17,800
Rush	10,400	7,635	18,035	24,337	17,601	5,867	23,468	17,800
Scott	10,400	9,448	19,848	29,656	37,359	12,453	49,812	23,484
Shelby	10,400	15,329	25,729	53,407	34,436	11,479	45,915	17,800
Spencer	10,400	7,532	17,932	23,680	29,151	9,717	38,868	17,800
Starke	10,400	8,933	19,333	29,736	19,584	6,528	26,112	17,800
Steuben	10,400	6,926	17,326	25,099	29,149	9,716	38,865	17,800
St. Joseph	31,416	28,504	59,920	119,732	113,132	37,711	150,843	54,954
Sullivan	10,400	7,809	18,209	24,647	25,169	8,390	33,559	17,800
Switzerland	10,400	7,372	17,772	20,769	23,837	7,946	31,783	17,800
Tippecanoe	15,165	15,291	30,456	59,564	55,322	18,441	73,763	28,336
Tipton	10,400	6,653	17,053	20,814	17,727	5,909	23,636	17,800
Union	10,400	6,672	17,072	19,491	20,368	6,789	27,157	17,800

Exhibit 5. Funding Streams Associated with Step Ahead, FY98.

County	Step Ahead Funds *			CCDF*	Family Preservation Funds*			First Steps *
	Planning-Coord'n	Discretionary Funds	Total	Quality Funds	Base Allocation	Required Match	Total Funds	Allocation
Vanderburgh	23,290	25,027	48,317	85,167	70,132	23,377	93,509	35,268
Vermillion	10,400	7,610	18,010	23,852	22,773	7,591	30,364	17,800
Vigo	13,607	19,378	32,985	69,761	58,712	19,571	78,283	33,881
Wabash	10,400	8,793	19,193	32,367	25,241	8,414	33,655	17,800
Warren	10,400	6,651	17,051	19,195	13,216	4,405	17,621	17,800
Warrick	10,400	8,557	18,957	31,482	45,387	15,129	60,516	17,800
Washington	10,400	8,753	19,153	29,528	23,009	7,670	30,679	17,800
Wayne	11,824	16,611	28,435	52,185	42,370	14,123	56,493	25,841
Wells	10,400	7,254	17,654	25,803	21,083	7,028	28,111	17,800
White	10,400	7,062	17,462	25,686	20,376	6,792	27,168	17,800
Whitley	10,400	6,971	17,371	25,905	22,730	7,577	30,307	17,800
TOTALS:								
Through Step Ahead:	1,227,190	1,100,001	2,327,191	3,882,131	3,836,232	1,278,750	5,114,982	2,101,327
* Step Ahead Funds (FY98) CCDF (FY97) Family Preservation Funds (Aug 1, 1997 - July 31, 1998) First Steps (FFY98).								

Child Care Development Fund. Step Ahead councils are responsible for funds from the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). There are three required components to CCDF funding: (1) child care; (2) program support; and (3) quality funds. The Step Ahead councils are responsible for planning the use of the \$3.8 million in quality funds.

In federal FY97, a \$62 million transfer from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) was made available to supplement the CCDF funding of \$66,150,175 and FFY97 Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding of \$16,849,825. Total available funding for child care in FFY97 was \$145 million. (CCDBG funding was merged into CCDF effective October 1, 1997.) The transfer of TANF funds was made because the cost of child care is one of the most commonly identified barriers to employment cited by low-income families. At the time of the transfer, approximately 15,400 children were on waiting lists to receive child care subsidies. Savings from welfare reform efforts were transferred to CCDF to help meet the increased needs for child care as families moved from welfare to work.

Quality funds can be spent for consumer education; supply building activities; training; and enhancement of local child care resources and referrals.

Consumer education activities include (1) how to choose good child care, different types of care, and parenting classes; (2) explaining the value of using or being a licensed provider; and (3) public awareness for quality child-care issues.

Exhibit 6. Healthy Families Indiana Allocations, FY98.

County	Healthy Families Allocation	County	Healthy Families Allocation
Adams	-	Montgomery	\$28,743
Allen	\$1,332,210	Perry	45,000
Bartholomew	96,000	Porter	140,000
Blackford	-	Pulaski	50,000
Boone	-	Randolph	-
Brown	-	Shelby	45,000
Clinton	-	Starke	58,000
Decatur	-	St. Joseph	82,218
Delaware	90,000	Tipton	-
Elkhart	216,351	Vanderburgh	111,180
Floyd	85,418	Washington	50,000
Grant	324,261	Wayne	50,094
Greene	103,719	Wells	-
Hamilton	56,891	Whitley	-
Harrison	-		
		Combined Counties:	
Hendricks	-	Benton/Fountain/Warren/White	\$246,000
Henry	50,000	Carroll/Tippecanoe	102,769
Howard	200,000	Cass/Fulton/Miami/Wabash	359,315
Huntington	-	Clark/Scott	97,023
Jackson	-	Clay/Morgan/Parke	261,000
Jay	-	Crawford/Orange	175,212
Jefferson	-	Dubois/Spencer/Warrick	90,000
Johnson	-	Jennings/Ohio/Ripley/Switzerland/ Dearborn/Franklin	115,000
Knox	84,477	Hancock/Lawrence	105,000
Kosciusko	-		
Lagrange	-	Davies/Martin	43,686
Lake	100,000	Jasper/Newton	70,000
LaPorte	87,215	Dekalb/Noble/Steuben	225,838
Madison	50,000	Owen/Putnam	121,956
Marion	653,837	Gibson/Pike/Posey	116,250
Marshall	-	Fayette/Rush/Union	221,771
Monroe	80,000	Sullivan/Vermillion/Vigo	340,900
		Total	\$6,962,334

Supply building activities include (1) creating child-care spaces in the county; (2) activities to improve the health and safety of children in child-care settings; (3) activities that support licensing of child-care sites; and (4) libraries that lend books, tapes, toys, and large motor equipment for providers' use. Training eligible for funding includes (1) CPR, first aid, health and safety training; (2) training for providers caring for special needs children; and (3) training for child-care providers.

Each local Step Ahead council must have an "Educare" committee to determine the types of projects to be funded from the CCDF. A county's allocation of quality funds is based on 75% of the prior year's utilization of funds and 25% on the number of families below 150% of the federal poverty level. The amount each county received in state FY98 is found in Exhibit 5.

Each local Step Ahead council is assigned an Educare consultant from the Bureau of Child Development. The Bureau has divided the state into 13 areas, with each area assigned an Educare consultant. The consultant is responsible for reviewing the county's plan for spending CCDF dollars. As indicated earlier, in order to receive funds from CCDF, each county must contract with a voucher agent to administer the funds.

Family Preservation Program. Local Step Ahead councils are responsible for planning of family preservation and support services through the federal Family Preservation and Support Services Program (FPSSP). Indiana's share of the federal program was \$3.8 million for August 1, 1997 through July 31, 1998. The program has a number of federal requirements. First, a 25% match of total family spending is required which can be in cash or in-kind services. Some local Offices of Family and Children provide matching funds. Second, the program requires four types of services: (1) community-based family support; (2) family preservation; (3) time-limited family reunification; and (4) adoption promotion and support. Third, at a minimum, 25% of a county's Family Preservation Program funds must be spent on family preservation and a minimum of 25% must be spent on support systems.

Community-based family support services promote the safety and well-being of children and families and are designed to increase the strength of the family. Examples of the types of services include parenting classes, hot lines for parents, and counseling programs.

Family preservation services address the needs of children

who are known to the child welfare system and who are believed to be at risk or in crisis. Services include intensive case management, respite care, and parenting classes for parents. These are programs that have been recommended by the juvenile courts.

Time-limited family reunification services are defined as services and activities for children who are removed from their home and placed in foster care or child care institutions to facilitate the safe and appropriate reunification of the family. These services are available for 15 months after a child is removed from the home. Services that may be funded include (1) individual, group, or family counseling; (2) inpatient, residential or outpatient substance abuse treatment services; (3) mental health services; (4) assistance to address domestic violence; and (5) temporary child care and therapeutic services for families, including crisis nurseries.

Adoption promotion and support services are designed to encourage adoptions out of the foster care system that are in the best interests of the children. Services are pre- and post-adoptive and include activities designed to expedite the adoption process and support adoptive families.

In Indiana, 92 local Step Ahead councils receive requests for FPSSP funding from the FSSA. Each county Step Ahead council is responsible for developing the response to the request. Step Ahead councils use five-year plans developed by the councils in 1994 to determine services that require funding from the FPSSP. Funding for each county is based on an allocation formula approved by the Step Ahead Panel. The allocation formula provides \$10,000 per county plus an additional amount based on the number of children under the age of 18 in the county (75% weighting) and the number of children who have been abused or neglected and are receiving services in their own homes with the approval of the Juvenile Court (25% weighting).

All of the \$3.9 million FPSSP appropriation is passed through to local Step Ahead councils. None of the funds are used for state administrative purposes even though federal law allows for the use of 10% of the funds for state administration. Some counties choose to use fiscal agents who can use up to 10% for local administrative purposes. The amount each county received in family preservation dollars for August 1, 1997, through July 31, 1998, can be found in Exhibit 5.

First Steps. The Indiana First Steps Early Intervention System (First Steps) is another program for which local Step Ahead councils have a role in the provision of services. First Steps is Indiana's response to federal legislation first passed in 1986, reauthorized in 1990, and retitled the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA requires coordination of community-based systems of early intervention services for infants and toddlers (0-2) with special needs and their families. First Steps is administered by the Bureau of Child Development within FSSA's Division of Family and Children.

First Steps is a family-centered, locally-based system of services coordinated to provide intervention to infants and toddlers with disabilities or who are at risk of developmental delays as a result of a medical condition or biological risk factor. The following are the eligibility criteria:

- a 20% delay in one developmental area or a 15% delay in two or more developmental areas;
- a diagnosed condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay; or
- a biologic risk factor that has a high probability of leading to a developmental delay.

Children enter the system through one of 63 System Points of Entry (SPOE) throughout the state. The SPOE is responsible for ensuring that all referrals receive a timely response and that services are provided in a prompt, professional, and family-centered manner. The number of SPOE's depends on local county needs and, in some cases, two or more counties will coordinate for the general operations of a SPOE. The SPOE is responsible for ensuring that opportunities are made available to families, and that decisions that families make are made with accurate and timely information; the knowledge of choices or options available; and the full understanding of the families' rights, opportunities, and responsibilities under federal and state law.

Federal law requires that each county appoint a Local Planning and Coordination Council (LPCC) whose primary responsibility is to advise and assist with the implementation of the First Steps system. The LPCC is responsible for identifying community resources and inviting service providers to coordinate early intervention services for children. In 39 counties, the Step Ahead Council is used as the LPCC. Typically, in these cases, the LPCC is a subcommittee of the council. In all counties, the LPCC was to be included in the initial development of the Step Ahead council.

The FY98 First Steps system coordination allocation was prepared using October 1, 1997, child count data from the statewide SPOE database. The total amount allocated to the counties was \$2,101,327. Each county received \$17,800 plus an additional allocation based on child counts.

Total awards were to be expended in the following manner: 85% for system coordination activities and 15% for consumer education and personal development. Total funding per county can be found in Exhibit 5.

Prior Evaluation of Step Ahead

INSIGHTS Evaluation. In 1995, the Family and Social Services Administration Step Ahead Office and the Step Ahead Panel contracted with INSIGHTS, an independent consulting firm, to evaluate Indiana's Step Ahead process. This was undertaken in response to the Step Ahead Panel's statutory duty to conduct an assessment of Step Ahead. INSIGHTS, in conjunction with Step Ahead, developed an evaluation process based on case studies that used both quantitative and qualitative data obtained over an 18-month period. INSIGHTS' report was presented to the Step Ahead Panel in November 1997. INSIGHTS focused on five areas: (1) the collaboration between the state Step Ahead Office and the local Step Ahead councils; (2) local Step Ahead councils' coordination with their respective communities; (3) the development and coordination of new partnerships and service systems, as well as expansion of existing partnerships and service systems; (4) the development of the local Step Ahead councils; and (5) early childhood development programs.

The INSIGHTS evaluators used a stratified random sample to identify the seven Indiana counties that were examined. INSIGHTS used geographic representation; allocation levels; cultural and demographic diversity; and rural, urban, and suburban communities as criteria for the selection of the sample. Three counties were chosen for northern Indiana--Lake, St. Joseph, and Clinton--three counties in southern Indiana--Floyd, Fayette, and Knox--and Marion County in central Indiana.

The INSIGHTS evaluation team reviewed documents and conducted interviews and questionnaires of over 600 people. Each of the seven Step Ahead coordinators were interviewed on-site, providing information on state-local collaboration, council and community coordination, partnership development and coordination, council development, and early childhood development programs. Also interviewed during the data collection process were the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) voucher and/or fiscal agents, preschool pilot directors, discretionary grant recipients, and Step Ahead executive council members. These individuals were interviewed in order to obtain information concerning accountability, organizational structure, roles, and responsibilities.

The evaluation team also interviewed local Step Ahead council members; home and center-based child care providers; clergy; community, civic, and business leaders; CCDF consumers; university, school district, and hospital administrators; agency heads; mayors and county government officials; police department personnel;

community volunteers; and private citizens.

For each of the counties studied, INSIGHTS developed a descriptive profile which included demographic and social indicators; the history, mission, membership, structure, staff, fiscal agents, and CCDF voucher agents of the councils; and funding levels. The analysis examined the internal strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as external opportunities and threats to Step Ahead. The INSIGHTS evaluation examined the progress Step Ahead made toward national "best practices" for reform in social service delivery systems in the five areas described above.

Collaboration Between the State and Local Step Ahead Councils. In order to evaluate the collaboration between the state and local Step Ahead councils, INSIGHTS developed a list of "best practices" on service integration efforts through the United States. The following is a summary of the "best practices" used to evaluate.

- States provide flexible structures for local groups rather than hard and fast rules for operation.
- There is mutual understanding, respect, and trust between state and local representatives.
- States monitor local groups' progress and assure accountability.
- There is two-way communication between state and local groups.
- States provide sufficient resources for communities to reach goals.
- States provide a clear bipartisan public policy agenda and take a leadership role in support of the well being of children and families.

Based on information from the seven counties studied the following is a summary of the INSIGHTS evaluation.

Strengths (State-Local Collaboration)

- The work of the local Step Ahead councils was initiated at the highest level of government with strong support by the Governor.
- Councils are allowed considerable flexibility in structuring their council and in spending funds to meet the vision of Step Ahead.

Weaknesses (State-Local Collaboration)

- Most of the communication is considered by local councils and staff as top-down initiatives and directives.

- Reliable communication depends on having a consistent state consultant who works with the county for some length of time.
- Counties often feel overwhelmed by Step Ahead demands for the creation of new structures, needs assessments, plans of action, progress reports, by-laws, and conflict of interest policies.
- Counties can prioritize spending, but there is a lack of adequate funding for administrative management and support.

Opportunities (State-Local Collaboration)

- Overall the coordinators and councils trust the Step Ahead Director and the FSSA.
- The State tends to receive reports from the counties without judgement, trusting that they are spending resources wisely.

Threats (State-Local Collaboration)

- Goals should be collaboratively developed for Step Ahead at the local and state level.
- Outcome goals must be regularly measured to monitor Step Ahead progress and achievement.
- A survey of 116 council members found the majority said they lacked skills in collaborative decision-making; their council goals were not very clear, and that council actions did not necessarily reflect local goals.
- Lead time to submit grant proposals is too short to allow local councils to engage in a collaborative decision-making process which relies on volunteers.

Coordination Between Local Councils and Local Communities. “Best practices” criteria to evaluate local coordination are as follows:

- Programs and activities are based on a community needs and resource assessment.
- Important segments of the local community are involved.
- Special attention is paid to involve consumers.
- There must be multiple avenues of involvement.
- Efforts are made to enhance public awareness and commitment to the service integration effort.

INSIGHTS’ assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are as follows.

Strengths (Local Coordination)

- Community members serve on ad hoc planning committees, help to review grants and project

proposals, provide financial support, offer space for services or meetings and provide supplies and other services for free.

Weaknesses (Local Coordination)

- Most needs assessments tended to be limited in scope, focusing on community perceptions of problems.
- Little attention in these seven counties was paid to assessing existing and potential resources and assets in local communities.
- Although most local Step Ahead meetings are open to the public and announced in advance, parents seldom attend because meetings are held in the daytime while they are working or in school.

Opportunities (Local Coordination)

- Consumers are mostly satisfied with the child care subsidy (CCDF) programs. However, these parents do not identify CCDF as a Step Ahead program. Therefore, Step Ahead’s reputation is not enhanced by parents satisfaction with child care subsidy programs.

Threats (Local Coordination)

- Only 16% of council members reported their local communities were “very committed” to Step Ahead.

Development and Coordination of New and/or Expanded Partnerships and Service Systems. The major objective of Step Ahead is to encourage agencies and organizations to work together to meet the needs of families. In order to be effective, agencies and organizations must develop new partnerships and new ways to serve families. “Best practices” criteria used to evaluate are as follows:

- Coordination involves organizations’ having information about their services and informally working together.
- Collaboration is also needed to alleviate scarcity of resources and prevent families from being lost in bureaucracies.
- Interagency agreements and/or planning committees are established.
- Funding becomes flexible, pooled or decategorized.
- Co-location of services is undertaken.
- Single point for intake application and assessment for clients is set.
- Individualized child or family case assessments and service plans are made.
- Case conferences or case panels are organized.

INSIGHTS' assessment is as follows.

Strengths (Expanded Partnerships and Systems)

- The vast majority (84%) of the 116 council members surveyed agreed that Step Ahead “helps my group learn more about community events, services.”
- Three quarters agreed that Step Ahead “has improved the quality of contact and coordination my group has made with other organizations.”
- Step Ahead has become the forum for developing ideas on how collaboration between agencies can occur.
- Step Ahead facilitates collaboration through offering opportunities for funding, providing technical assistance (grant writing) and providing volunteers for projects.

Weaknesses (Expanded Partnerships and Systems)

- Local decisions about funding programs do not appear to be “strategic.” Councils often respond to requests for funding without always considering whether responses are in line with council goals and objectives.
- Key business leaders in the sampled communities are often unaware of Step Ahead or, if aware, are reluctant to become involved.
- In some counties, city and county elected officials are non-participants in Step Ahead.

Opportunities (Expanded Partnerships and Systems)

- The State Step Ahead Office could facilitate more opportunities for training and technical assistance.

Threats (Expanded Partnerships and Systems)

- As long as Step Ahead is regarded as a “government program,” it will suffer from the same stereotypes as other government initiatives.
- Step Ahead councils in the study often lack community respect and credibility.
- Local Step Ahead councils in the study did not engage in strategic planning or outcomes evaluation.

Local Step Ahead Council Development. For effective service integration to occur, a planning group is essential. In Indiana, these planning groups are the local county-based Step Ahead councils. Below are the criteria used by INSIGHTS to measure how effective the Step Ahead councils had been in reaching service integration goals.

- Members feel that the meetings are mostly reports of

- Goals, objectives, and strategies are jointly developed and agreed upon.
- Responsibility for obtaining these goals is shared.
- The group works together to achieve these goals.
- Membership should represent key segments of the community.
- Members should feel a high sense of commitment to the vision of the planning group.
- Activities remain focused on goals.
- Turfism, territoriality, and competition are rejected in favor of focusing on a shared vision.
- Group members trust and respect one another.
- Meetings are well run.
- Communication is open and frequent.
- Conflict is resolved effectively.
- Decisions are made by consensus in a timely manner.
- Workload is fairly shared.
- Leadership is strong but flexible and collaborative.
- Adequate staff support exists.

INSIGHTS' assessment of Step Ahead relative to the criteria follows.

Strengths (Local Council Development)

- The majority of councils are diverse in their representation of community agencies.
- Council meetings are open to the public, and they are usually advertised in the local papers.
- Over time, councils have become better organized, publishing minutes, following agendas, developing by-laws, supporting active committees, and compiling council manuals for new members.
- Council members tended to report that decisions are reached by consensus.
- In most councils, there were remarkable or considerable trust and openness.

Weaknesses (Local Council Development)

- Most councils continue to lack a racially diverse membership.
- Councils often make assumptions about what is best for consumers without knowing clearly who the consumers are and what they need.
- Although the state Step Ahead Office sponsors coordinator meetings and training workshops, there are still limited opportunities for the development of council leadership skills.
- Although attendance at meetings is usually good, council members often complain about the bureaucratic nature of local Step Ahead meetings and their length. information, with insufficient time for discussion,

engagement, and problem solving.

- Step Ahead council meetings and activities do not always focus on the mission of Step Ahead or on vision, goals, and strategies defined by the council.

Opportunities (Local Council Development)

- Consumers interviewed for the study indicated their willingness to give input to Step Ahead.
- Incentives and increased appropriations could fund more coordinator and council training and technical assistance in the areas of finance, consumer involvement, board leadership, running effective meetings, and creative problem solving.

Threats (Local Council Development)

- Bureaucratic paperwork, mindsets, policies, and practices at the state and local levels can jeopardize Step Ahead.
- Step Ahead councils seldom engage in measuring outcomes that demonstrate the results of Step Ahead in their county.
- Council members do not vote on issues related to their organizations; however, it remains difficult for them to keep from influencing the direction or decisions of Step Ahead.
- Based on current appropriations, Step Ahead relies mostly on volunteers and part-time paid coordinators.
- In some counties, especially the small, rural ones, there may not be enough people with the interest, knowledge, skills, and time to regularly assist local Step Ahead councils.
- Legislative and other elected leaders often do not support Step Ahead councils in their counties, limiting community support and council success.

Early Childhood Development. This last section was analyzed in regards to “funding outcomes” of early childhood program services related to Step Ahead. These outcomes fall into two main categories: system outcomes (improvements in the functioning of the service system from families’ points of view) and human outcomes (enhancement of the well-being of children and families).

Criteria for evaluation of system outcomes:

- Are services provided in a manner that is client-centered, i.e., holistic, seamless, comprehensive, user-friendly, easily accessible?
- Are services oriented to prevention and support, helping all families become self-sufficient and empowered, or are they only focused on remediation or crisis intervention for some families?

- Are services delivered more efficiently (i.e., with less bureaucracy, less duplication of effort)?
- Is funding secure and innovative?
- Have efforts resulted in more funding being available to increase services for those not previously served?
- Is there an equitable distribution of services and funds across needy groups?
- Are services family-centered, rather than child-centered? Services should be based on the “recognition that the family is the constant in the child’s life while the service systems and personnel within these systems fluctuate.” Are parents involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs designed to enhance children’s well-being?
- Has the professional development of service providers been enhanced, so that they have the skills to work in integrated service settings, e.g., involving case management, interagency teams, and multi- service organizations?

Criteria for evaluation of human outcomes.

- An agreed upon set of general goals (benchmarks).
- Goals should apply to all children.
- Specific prevention-focused objectives that service integration efforts are designed to achieve.
- Creative, collaborative strategies likely to meet these objectives.
- Evaluation efforts put in place even before activities are implemented, to assess outcomes, identify factors related to success, and provide feedback to encourage mid-course corrections.

INSIGHTS’ assessment of Step Ahead is as follows.

Strengths (Early Childhood Development)

- Step Ahead’s biggest effort has been to provide affordable child care for more low-income working and student parents.
- The CCDF voucher system used by Step Ahead allows parents to choose who takes care of children.
- Step Ahead sponsors training for home day care providers and employees of day care centers.
- The pilot preschool programs provide high quality early educational experiences to low-income children.
- Step Ahead collaborates with various organizations and programs to provide comprehensive services to families with young children, which are designed to prevent problems from developing rather than intervention once problems have become serious.

Weaknesses (Early Childhood Development)

- Parents choose their child care provider through the CCDF program; however, they lack opportunities to give input as consumers about child care subsidies and other services designed to help families with young children.
- Based on appropriate federal and state funds, there are long waiting lists of families for child care CCDF voucher subsidies.
- Child care providers complained about paperwork and delayed payments for new families.
- Councils do not document results and outcomes of initiatives.

Opportunities (Early Childhood Development)

- Step Ahead has already established the concept of decategorized and blended funding. This concept could be expanded to merge more funding streams so that child care subsidies are more readily available to low-income families.
- Local Step Ahead councils could coordinate activities that would train front line service providers to collaborate in a manner that would help deliver programs designed to promote child care and family well being.
- While Step Ahead has improved the quality of child care by offering training to child care providers and offering education to parents, the community could benefit from training on quality child care issues (e.g., rules for licensing, characteristics of quality care, the importance of staff certification).

Threats (Early Childhood Development)

- In some counties, consumer fraud was perceived as a concern in regard to the use of CCDF voucher funds. Without the establishment of firm policies to track payments, fraud can undermine the credibility and support for the program.
- The complexities involved in federal/state/local financing are often mysterious to CCDF voucher agents, and this prevents them from knowing how to efficiently “roll over” funds to secure reliable subsidies for parents.

Recommendations of the INSIGHTS Evaluation of Step Ahead. Recommendations provided by the INSIGHTS study are summarized below:

State and Local Collaboration

- The State needs to establish a clear vision, mission, outcome goals, objectives, and benchmarks for Step Ahead.
- The State needs to provide quality training, technical assistance, and financial support to local councils, staff, and stakeholders.
- Each county should have one knowledgeable and skilled state consultant that the county can rely on for at least one year.
- The State needs to continue to lessen requirements and eliminate unreasonable time lines, paperwork, and bureaucracy. The State also needs to develop policies and procedures to promote flexibility and innovation in responding to local needs.

Council and Community Coordination

- Step Ahead councils need to engage the parents and families in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of Step Ahead activities at the local level.
- Step Ahead councils need to enhance involvement of community stakeholders (business, industry, civic leaders). Possible avenues for community involvement include external review panels, community round tables, focus groups, etc.

Partnership Development and Coordination

- Step Ahead councils need to extend partnerships to create a more comprehensive, seamless delivery system.

Council Development

- The State needs to develop strategies, actions, benchmarks, and assessments with local councils.
- Step Ahead councils should establish external panels to review Step Ahead decisions involving funding.
- Step Ahead councils need to develop strategies with local communities to prevent council member burnout. Councils should establish a clear focus, priorities, and attainable goals.

Early Childhood Development Programs

- The State and Step Ahead councils need to measure outcomes of early childhood initiatives.

- The State and the Step Ahead councils need to increase efforts to blend child care funding streams to eliminate or reduce funding lapses resulting from the intermittent distribution of block grant dollars.

FSSA'S Response to the INSIGHTS Evaluation. The FSSA's Office of Community Planning (OCP), which administers the Step Ahead program, is currently re-organizing in order to enhance the Step Ahead process. FSSA personnel state that initial plans for changes include a reaffirmation of the Step Ahead mission, working with the local councils to establish program benchmarks and performance outcomes, strengthening local council development, implementing more training and technical assistance for local councils, and making available to local councils state planning consultants.

Survey by Cooperative Extension Services. The Cooperative Extension Service (CES)² is a three-way partnership between federal, state, and local governments. The CES arose from the belief that university research could provide practical non-biased information and knowledge to citizens and businesses and lead to greater individual and community prosperity. In Indiana, the CES is based in Purdue University's School of Agriculture in collaboration with the Schools of Consumer and Family Services and Veterinary Medicine. The CES has an office in each county in Indiana. In an effort by CES administrators to determine the CES involvement in Step Ahead, each of the county CES offices received a survey in January 1997.

A total of 55 CES offices responded that they either had been or were on one or more committees established by Step Ahead councils. Committees included Food and Nutrition, Educare, Child Care, Family Preservation and Family Support, First Steps, and various special committees formed around specific local activities. CES staff chaired eleven local Step Ahead councils, served as the Step Ahead Coordinator in one county, vice president in two counties, and fiscal agent in two counties.

Thirty-five county CES offices indicated that they had received funding from Step Ahead councils for a variety of programs, such as parent and/or child nutrition program, 4-H camp, day care provider training, Blue Ribbon Parenting, and parenting newsletters. CES offices received a total of \$47,545 in 1996.

Most of the responding counties cited the opportunity to meet and share with other professionals and agencies to address the needs of the community in a collaborative atmosphere as the strength of the local councils. Weaknesses cited included poor attendance at council meetings, too few people controlling the councils, and short turnaround time for grants and proposals.

The overall impression from those county CES offices responding was that in most counties Step Ahead was working well -- better in some counties than others--but overall things were being accomplished that were not prior to Step Ahead.

²For further information on the Cooperative Extension Service's role in social services and welfare reform efforts, see Issues Relating to the Cooperative Extension Service, Legislative Services Agency, July 1997.

Step Ahead Issues and Options

The balance of this report examines several issues related to Step Ahead including an evaluation of the Step Ahead process by examining (1) certain performance indicators; (2) the Step Ahead process at the state level as it relates to its original statutory goals; and (3) two local council initiatives as they relate to the roles and responsibilities prescribed for the local Step Ahead councils.

The report will also consider issues pertaining to local council governing policies implemented as a result of concerns about consumer rights and potential provider conflicts of interest. Local councils are required to institute policies regarding conflict of interest, consumer comment procedures, and appeals procedures.

Finally, other issues regarding training and the most appropriate role for local councils are considered.

Data was obtained from FSSA, interviews with advocates, fiscal/voucher agents, local Step Ahead coordinators, and from a mail survey of local coordinators. The survey questionnaire was mailed to the local Step Ahead coordinators in all 92 counties. A follow-up mailing was conducted for those questionnaires not returned. A response rate of 72% was achieved. The survey questionnaire with a summary of responses is in Appendix 6.

Step Ahead Performance Indicators. The Step Ahead process was designed to allow each county to identify its own goals and objectives and to determine which projects would be funded. The variety of goals and objectives identified by 92 counties as well as the variety of resources available to the 92 counties make an overall statewide assessment of the Step Ahead process difficult.

Several key indicators may be useful in assessing the performance of Step Ahead (FSSA, 1997). These indicators include (1) the number of child care centers and child care homes; (2) the number of abuse and neglect cases; (3) the number of children receiving intervention services; (4) immunization rates; and (5) high school graduation rates. The changes in some of the key indicators on a statewide basis between 1991 and 1997 are provided in this chapter. However, it is important to note that, while some useful information can be gained from examining the changes in the indicators, there are also some serious methodological problems with trying to draw inferences regarding the success of Step Ahead, either at the statewide level or at the local level.

The INSIGHTS evaluation also addressed the issue of child care. For each of the counties studied, INSIGHTS reported

Most importantly, an increase or decrease in a particular indicator, especially on a statewide level, cannot be solely attributed to the Step Ahead process. There are many other factors that can also influence the level of the indicator. These can include socio-demographic factors, economic performance statewide and in specific localities, and a host of other factors.

In addition, statewide numbers can also mask the individual performance of 92 separate and distinct communities with different goals, values, and community and organizational dynamics. In other words, a county with a primary goal of reducing the incidence of teen pregnancy, even if very successful in achieving that goal, may not fare well on indicators describing child abuse and neglect. Also, the performance on an aggregate statewide basis may mask the individual successes achieved by certain localities.

The challenge for FSSA and the State Step Ahead Office is to provide technical guidance to the counties in both formulating individualized performance indicators relevant to the communities' own goals and values and then direction in measuring the performance of the county against those criteria. This was a specific recommendation of the INSIGHTS report. The INSIGHTS report cited a need for outcome goals to be regularly monitored to measure Step Ahead progress and achievement. As a result, FSSA has responded that they plan to work with the local councils to establish program benchmarks and performance outcomes.

With those caveats in mind, the suggested indicators do provide some quantitative evidence of changes in conditions of and services for families and children in the state. These changes may be a result of many factors but may also be due, in part, to the performance of local Step Ahead councils.

Changes in the Number of Child Care Facilities. One of the areas in which the county Step Ahead councils not only receive federal funding but also spend a great deal of time is child care. Since 1991, the number of licensed child care centers as well as the capacity at these centers have increased statewide. In 1991, 628 licensed child care centers existed in Indiana with a capacity of 49,499 children. By 1997, 647 licensed child care centers existed with a capacity of 55,907 (Source: FSSA).

In terms of licensed child care homes, in 1991, 1,910 homes maintained a capacity of 15,290. In 1997, 2,825 licensed child care homes had a capacity of 32,574 (Source: FSSA).

that Step Ahead's biggest strength had been the provision of affordable child care for low-income working parents and

student parents. INSIGHTS also found that parents reported satisfaction with the child care voucher process.

Changes in the Number of Abuse and Neglect Cases.

Step Ahead councils receive funding from the federal Family Preservation and Support Services Program. One area in which these funds can be spent is for family preservation services. One indicator of success in family preservation is the number of substantiated and indicated child abuse and neglect cases statewide. Many Step Ahead councils have as a goal a reduction in the number of child abuse and neglect cases. The INSIGHTS report stated that Step Ahead collaborates with various organizations to provide services designed to prevent abuse and neglect from developing in families with young children rather than intervening once problems have become serious.

Since 1991, the number of reported cases of child abuse and neglect has declined. In 1991, 32,284 cases of child abuse and neglect were reported. In 1997, 18,104 were reported (Source: FSSA).

Changes in the Number of Children Receiving Intervention Services. The primary program for early intervention services in Indiana is the First Steps Program. Thirty-nine Step Ahead councils are involved in providing system planning for the First Steps Program. In other counties, First Steps Local Planning and Coordinating Councils and Step Ahead councils work together.

FSSA statistics show an increase in the number of children receiving early intervention services. In 1991, 2,591 children received such services and 8,856 children received early intervention services by 1997.

Are Statutory Goals Being Met?

The statutory goals of the program are provided in IC 20-1-1-8-12. Specific statutory goals are discussed below.

- ***To identify and recognize the various eligible programs available in each county at the federal, state, local, and private levels.***

The county Step Ahead councils are required to develop and update plans of action. These plans require a Step Ahead council to identify funding sources and programs available in the county. Also, the Step Ahead Office provides

- ***To encourage coordination and cooperation among the eligible programs and to discourage duplication of services.***

This statutory goal has been met in a number of ways. At the state level, the Indiana Policy Council, in the early stages of

information to the councils on federal and state funding sources. According to FSSA, between 1991 and 1996, Step Ahead has mobilized over \$24 million in additional funds for counties to serve children and families (FSSA, 1997, p. 2). This information was obtained by the State Step Ahead Office by contacting the Step Ahead councils and asking the councils to identify other funds the councils have been able to access as a result of the Step Ahead process. These dollars were from various sources for diverse projects, both on-going and one-time only projects.

The Indiana Department of Commerce Community Focus Program has invested \$14 million in the development of child care facilities in 38 municipalities (FSSA, 1997, p. 2).

Another measure of this goal being met is the generation of new funding. County Step Ahead coordinators identified for LSA, projects in which new funding sources were used as well as whether these new funding sources would have been identified without the Step Ahead process. Of 65 counties responding, 61% listed projects that had used new funding sources identified through Step Ahead.

A third measure of this goal's attainment is the ability of Step Ahead councils to blend funding streams from different programs. Some examples of blended funding for projects include Elkhart, Porter, and White Counties. In Elkhart County, a program to provide before and after school care for 500 children was developed using blended funding from private and corporate donors, the United Way, and Step Ahead discretionary funds. In Porter County, a free clinic was developed using funds from Porter Memorial Hospital and the Porter County Chamber of Commerce. White County received a \$25,000 grant from the Department of Commerce to provide emergency shelter services. An additional \$25,000 was provided through in-kind contributions and Step Ahead discretionary grants.

While some counties have been successful at blending funds for projects, some of the more rural, less populated counties have found it difficult to develop blended funding projects because of a general lack of financial resources available.

At the state level, the Healthy Families Indiana program has developed a blended funding stream based upon interagency collaboration by FSSA, the State Department of Health, and the Criminal Justice Institute.

the development of the Step Ahead process and whose emphasis was to help the collaboration process at the state and local levels of government, has helped meet the above goal. Barriers that the county Step Ahead councils found in collaboration were referred to the Policy Council.

Many counties have been successful in bringing social services agencies, providers, and consumers together. County coordinators indicated to LSA that developing a collaborative process was one of the main strengths of Step Ahead. The INSIGHTS evaluation reported that the majority of the councils are diverse in their representation of community agencies and that council meetings are open to the public and are usually advertised in the newspaper. A review of the membership of the 92 Step Ahead councils shows a diverse representation of various organizations and interest groups.

The collaboration process at the county level also provides an opportunity to coordinate eligible programs and avoid duplication of services. The School Age Care Program in Blackford County is an example of a collaborative effort in the coordination of services. This program was developed through the coordination of the YMCA, Blackford County Schools, and the Blackford County Step Ahead Council (FSSA, 1997, p.17).

However, a review of the council membership suggests that two groups - business leaders and elected officials - need to be better represented. Business leaders made up only 2.6% of the council membership in the 92 counties and elected officials constituted only 1.3% of the council membership. More representation from these groups would further strengthen the collaborative effort. The INSIGHTS evaluation found that key business leaders in the communities studied were often unaware of Step Ahead or were reluctant to become involved because they saw it as just another government program. The INSIGHTS evaluation also found that in some counties local and city elected officials are non-participants. So even though the Step Ahead councils have developed a good collaborative process, some groups need to be better represented.

- ***To provide comprehensive eligible programs countywide that are accessible to all children and affordable to the children's parents.***

A number of programs are made available to children countywide. For instance, Brown County expanded the after-school child care program provided by the county Parks and Recreation Department to all the elementary schools in the county. Clinton County expanded the annual "Kids Fair" All Step Ahead programs encourage parental involvement; some programs do so more than others. The First Steps Early Intervention System is an example of a program encouraging direct parental involvement. Parents are directly involved in the development of the Individualized Family Service Plan that determines what services should be provided to the child. Also, in the Healthy Families Indiana program, parents are involved in determining needed

held in conjunction with the countywide health fair. Numerous examples exist of programs that are countywide and that are accessible to all children.

- ***To recognize the specific service needs of and unique resources available to particular counties, develop those into a statewide resource listing and to incorporate flexibility regarding the implementation of eligible programs.***

Many of the county Step Ahead councils have worked at determining the service needs and the resources that are available in their county. Results from the LSA survey shows that counties continue to work at determining the local needs and where new funding sources can be found. The rural counties have a more difficult time in identifying new resources because fewer resources exist. There is not a list of statewide resources. The state Step Ahead Office issues annual reports that lists accomplishments for individual counties that may include examples of counties using new funding sources.

- ***To prevent or minimize the potential for developmental delay in children before the children reach the age of compulsory school attendance.***

The Indiana First Steps Early Intervention System, while a response to new federal programs, is designed to meet this type of goal. Although the First Steps Program is outside the scope of this evaluation, First Steps was developed to provide services to children with disabilities, developmental delays, or risk factors and their families. First Steps was developed to meet the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act whose goal was that all children will start school ready to learn.

- ***To strengthen the family unit through the following: (a) encouragement of parental involvement in a child's development and education; (b) prevention of disruptive employment conditions for parents who are employed; (c) enhancement of the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their children, including those children with disabilities.***

services.

The CCDF program, which provides child-care vouchers for low-income families, is an example of a program administered in partnership with Step Ahead councils and local offices of the Division of Family and Children to help prevent disruptive employment conditions.

The Preschool Pilot, First Steps, and the HFI programs are examples of programs that try to enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their children.

- *To enhance certain federally funded eligible programs.*

The federally funded Child Care Development Fund, First Steps Program, and Family Preservation and Support Services Program have been integral to Step Ahead's implementation. Federally funded programs have been enhanced through the blending of funding streams from state and local sources and from the coordination of local and state efforts to accomplish the same social goals.

The Harrison County Step Ahead coordinator provided an excellent example whereby federal funding streams were enhanced through local and state programs and coordination: "Family Preservation and Support Program, originally funded through a Step Ahead proposal to Metro United Way for families at-risk, is now school-based with fiscal management assigned to one agency, administration with another, and is operationally coordinated with a Department of Education partner program funded with a Stewart B. McKinney grant, which was also designed and proposed through Step Ahead. This high-risk case management system functions as one county-wide service for targeted families. In-kind services for this county-wide system include direct services for multiple programs and institutions including: the special education cooperative, North Harrison School Corporation, South Harrison School Corporation, and Harrison County Community Services.

The following statutory goals are not addressed in this report.

- *To reduce the educational costs to society by reducing the need for special education services after children reach school age.*
- *To assure that children with disabilities when appropriate are integrated into programs available to children who are not disabled.*
- *Beginning in 2000, to ensure that every child who*

since birth from eligible programs available under Step Ahead.

Statutory Intent of Step Ahead. A review of the Indiana Code provisions establishing the Step Ahead process shows a legislative intent that Step Ahead has a role in preparing children to enter Indiana's educational system. The statute is found in the educational law (Title 20) rather than in the social services statutes (Title 12). Membership of the Step Ahead Panel also demonstrates the educational intent by requiring the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to appoint four members of the 15-member Panel who are knowledgeable in early childhood education. Three of the ten statutory goals of the Step Ahead process are directly related to education. So there is strong evidence in the statute that the creators of the Step Ahead process wanted a solid emphasis on education.

As the Step Ahead process has evolved, the educational emphasis has been diminished. The Step Ahead process and the programs put in place at the local level appear to have often gone beyond the original educational focus and taken on a broader social services emphasis, both in terms of programming and the populations served. In fact, only one of the major funding streams used or influenced by Step Ahead (First Steps Program) is directly related to preparing certain children for school. Although the social problems of child care, child abuse and neglect, and teen pregnancy may indeed have an indirect educational impact, the emphasis does appear to have shifted to a predominantly social services focus. While this expansion of the focus of Step Ahead should not necessarily be considered a limitation or a problem, it does appear to represent a difference from the original intent. There is a need to clarify the role of the Department of Education as it relates to Step Ahead.

Local Council Responsibilities. In addition to statutory goals for the Step Ahead process, roles and responsibilities for the local councils are described in IAC 3-2-4. The extent to which each of the 92 local councils fulfills these responsibilities is not known. However, the following case examples of local Step Ahead initiatives illustrate how specific aspects of a local project relate to some of the

Case Example #1: Allen County Step Ahead

enrolls in kindergarten in Indiana has benefitted

responsibilities prescribed for local councils.

- Identify the needs of the county as they relate to children and families -

Allen County Step Ahead Council, in the development of their original strategic plan in 1991, determined that the failure of over 80% of the teen mothers in Allen County to complete high school was a major problem and concern for the community. This issue was assigned to the Council's Family Issues Committee for consideration.

- Encourage public participation -

The Committee undertook fact finding and invited school and other interested individuals to join the committee. Focus group interviews were conducted with groups of teen moms and dads, including those still in school and those that had dropped out.

- Identify present and prospective resources and services available to children and families -

A one year pilot program utilizing Step Ahead Discretionary funds was initiated and the case management approach was successful in reducing the dropout rate to less than 80%. During 1997, specific planning began for the development of a school-based case management program working with these students.

- Facilitate coordination among agencies serving the needs of children and families -

The Step Ahead Council issued a request for proposal to identify an applicant partner. A committee, appointed by the Council Chair, developed the proposal and served as the proposal evaluation team.

The Case Management Initiative, a local collaborative program developed by Lutheran and Catholic Social Services, was selected because of their history of providing services like those identified and also due to their history of successful collaboration in the community. A funding request was prepared and submitted to Parkview Hospital Foundation. Funding was obtained to hire the lead staff position for two years.

- Act as a liaison between public and private resources -

The lead staff person for the program will participate in the further development of the program and will work with the Step Ahead Coordinator to seek additional resources to expand the program throughout the school system. In addition to the supervisory and development responsibilities, this person will be working in one high school and the alternative program for pregnant teens.

- Identify the Needs of the County as They Relate to Children and Families -

In 1995, the Step Ahead Council of Wells County identified problems of escalating violence, gang activity, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, vandalism, and other social problems among young adults in the community. These issues were assigned to a team developed by the Step Ahead Council.

- Encourage Public Participation -

The team consisted of representatives from the Step Ahead Council, law enforcement, probation department, mental health, education, social services, medical, and religious sectors of the community. Team members reviewed statistics and listed concerns from the community about the problems. The team decided that, in order to address these issues, efforts needed to be implemented that were both remedial and preventative, i.e., services needed to support the young adults demonstrating these behaviors and provide families with resources to prevent these behaviors.

- Identify Present and Prospective Resources and Services Available to Children and Families -

The team decided that a number of separate programs, described below, could be developed to address each of the identified problems.

- Facilitate Coordination Among Agencies Serving the Needs of Children and Families -

The following programs are examples of the ways Wells County facilitates coordination among agencies serving the needs of children and families while addressing the problems identified above.

Counseling Program for Men who Abuse Women. The Center for Nonviolence in Ft. Wayne provides weekly individual and group counseling for men in Wells County. The Step Ahead Council of Wells County coordinates with local law enforcement; and with judicial, medical, and mental health organizations to provide services. Step Ahead initiated this venture with financial and in-kind services from the Caylor-Nickel Foundation; the Wells County Foundation; Park Center, Inc.; the United Way of Wells County; and area churches.

Support Group for Women Victims of Domestic Violence and Their Children. Step Ahead initiated this program with financial and in-kind support from the Caylor-Nickel Foundation; the Wells County Foundation; Tri-Kappa Sorority; Park Center, Inc.; the United Way of Wells County; and area churches. The Center for Nonviolence in Ft. Wayne and the YWCA Shelter for Women Victims of Violence provide weekly counseling, group therapy, advocacy, and support for women and their children in Wells County who are abused. The Step Ahead Council of Wells County provides on-going marketing of the services.

Free Teen Crisis Counseling and Hotline Services. With Step Ahead discretionary funds and funding from Park Center, Inc., families of teens in crisis can receive up to three free counseling sessions and can access a counseling hotline 24 hours a day.

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Services. Step Ahead discretionary funding developed a teen pregnancy prevention curriculum. The program has expanded from one school system to all the school systems in the county. The curriculum emphasizes the whole child, focusing on decision-making, self-esteem, dating and other topics.

Parenting Resources and Support. After the birth of a child, families of the child will receive a package mailed to their homes that contains a list of local resources for parents and information on child development, building a relationship with the baby, playing with the baby, and other useful pieces of information. The package was developed by the Step Ahead Council in conjunction with the Caylor-Nickel Medical Center, Wells Community Hospital, Markel Medical Center, the Wells County Health Department, and the United Way of Wells County.

- Act as a Liaison Between Public and Private Resources -

The Step Ahead Council of Wells County and the Coordinator continue to work to identify resources to continue these projects which serve the needs of Wells County's children and families.

Issues Pertaining to Local Council Governing Policies

Conflict of Interest Policies. Advocates, as well as the INSIGHTS evaluation report, expressed concern that membership of the Step Ahead councils could result in conflicts of interest. Service providers on the councils could, at worst, decide among themselves who will receive funding or, at least, be in a position to influence the direction of the decisions of the Step Ahead council (INSIGHTS, 1997, p. 85).

In order to alleviate these concerns, the state Step Ahead Panel passed SA 94-1, a policy that details the responsibilities and authority of local Step Ahead councils. As part of this policy, the Step Ahead Panel requires each local Step Ahead council to establish a conflict of interest policy to govern the actions of its officers, members, employees, and agents engaged in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of the Step Ahead program. The policy provides model language that local councils may use in developing conflict of interest policies. The model language is as follows:

All voting council members must disclose any situation in which they, their spouses, their unemancipated children or their business organization might financially benefit from an action or recommendation of the council. No council members may vote on any issue before the council in which the member or the member's spouse or unemancipated children may have a financial interest. The council shall determine whether a voting member may vote on any issue which might financially benefit the member's business organization. The council's officers, members, employees or agents shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from contractors or potential contractors.

According to the state Step Ahead Office, all 92 counties have adopted a conflict of interest policy. Policies are usually found in the council by-laws. LSA examined the by-laws of 25 councils and found that all councils examined had conflict of interest policies. Some counties had adopted the language suggested by the state, while others were much more elaborate in describing their policy.

The INSIGHTS evaluation recommended the establishment of external review panels for Step Ahead decisions relating to funding. INSIGHTS stated that community-based external review panels would have the added advantage of including business, industry, and consumers in local decisions and issues.

Consumer Comment Policies. The Step Ahead Panel approved policy document SA 94-2 which provides guidelines for consumer comment. The purpose of the policy is to allow parents or others involved in Step Ahead process to raise concerns about services being coordinated through Step Ahead. The approved policy requires each county to develop and implement a consumer comment policy which would include an information sheet for all consumers and parents that includes names, telephone numbers, and addresses of key local contacts as well as a mechanism for written comments.

There is no model language provided for the consumer comment policy. The SA 94-2 policy leaves the format and the language of the consumer comment policy to the individual council. An example of a comment policy is in Appendix 7.

Appeals Policies. Policy document SA 94-2 addressed the need for an appeals policy for Step Ahead decisions. The following contains suggested guidelines for an appeals policy as approved in SA 94-2.

(1) The following process shall be used in order to ensure fair consideration of appeals from adverse actions at any level of the Step Ahead program, including appeals by clients, service providers, fiscal agents or county coordinators from decisions rendered by services providers, fiscal agents, county coordinators, officials and staff of the Division of Family and Children ("DFC") and the Step Ahead Statewide Panel ("Panel"). This process shall apply to the programs presently coordinated through the Step Ahead program which are identified and attached hereto.

(2) This policy does not cover the procedures to be used by DFC in resolving child care licensing appeals, which are set out elsewhere in applicable Indiana statutes and regulations. Also, this policy does not cover procedures used by DFC in resolving disputes/complaints through the Early Intervention System for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities which are set out elsewhere in applicable federal statutes and regulations. Further, appeals may not be taken from decisions made by a local Step Ahead council or fiscal agent regarding the awarding of contracts for services, provided procurement policies established by the FSSA have been followed.

(3) This statement is to serve as a procedural guide only and does not confer any enforceable rights.

(4) Each affected person or agency shall, at a minimum, be notified of the appeals procedures, in writing, at the time any adverse action (such as the denial of eligibility of denial of services) is taken. The names, telephone numbers and addresses of necessary contacts shall be provided. Step Ahead program staff shall assist each county in developing appeals procedures, consistent with the policies set forth herein, to be used for this purpose.

(5) DFC and its grantees shall attempt local and informal resolution of client and service provider disputes whenever possible.

(6) Any client dispute that cannot be resolved directly by the service provider or any dispute raised by a service provider or county coordinator shall be appealed first to the local fiscal agent or county Step Ahead council. Appeals by fiscal agents may be heard first by the county Step Ahead council or be presented to the DFC, Bureau of Child Development as outlined below.

(7) If any appeals remains unresolved at the local level, it may be appealed in writing, within 15 business days, to the Bureau of Child Development (BCD) which will review the complaint and issue a written determination within 30 days of receipt of the request. If the complaint remains unresolved after BCD issues its written determination, a request for an evidentiary hearing may be submitted in writing to the Director of DFC within 30 calendar days from the effective date of the action being appealed. A written decision will be issued within 90 days of the receipt of a request for an evidentiary hearing.

(8) The Director of DFC may, at the Director's discretion, delegate hearing responsibilities to the Panel or to any panel or individual. All evidentiary hearings will be conducted in accordance with 470 IAC 1-4.

As with the conflict of interest policy and the consumer comment policy, each of the 92 county Step Ahead councils must have adopted an appeals policy before funding is granted.

Although all county Step Ahead councils do have some form of conflict of interest, consumer comment, and appeals policy in place, problems may still arise. Continued vigilance on the part of the local councils is necessary, in addition to the stated policies, to prevent problems from occurring. Additional safeguards, such as external review panels (as suggested by the INSIGHTS evaluation) and active dissemination of the policies to the public, could minimize the potential for problems and help to increase the credibility of the program as well as the trust of the community.

Other Issues

In addition to consideration of the specific statutory goals for Step Ahead and responsibilities of local councils, other issues were studied. Some of these issues were identified by council coordinators through a mailed survey questionnaire or in interviews with advocates and fiscal agents.

- Training for Regional Voucher and/or Fiscal Agents
- Role of the local council: planning versus administration
- Elimination of Overlap with Other Community Planning Efforts
- Can Step Ahead accomplishments be achieved by other means

Training for Regional Voucher and/or Fiscal Agents. One fiscal agent expressed a need for meetings of the voucher and fiscal agents on either a quarterly or annual basis. Voucher and fiscal agents are responsible for ensuring that the program funds are paid to the service providers and in completing the various paperwork requirements of the programs. The state Step Ahead Office held, until recently, bi-monthly regional meetings for coordinators to allow for discussion of new programs, timing, and general problem-solving. (These meetings will now be held quarterly.) In order to get a sense for the need for voucher and/or fiscal agent meetings, local Step Ahead coordinators were asked in the LSA survey if they believed that regional or statewide meetings for voucher agents and fiscal agents would be useful.

Of the 42 responses to this question, 67% believed that voucher and/or fiscal agent meetings would definitely be useful. While 21% expressed no opinion, 12% indicated that the meetings would probably not be useful. Several written comments suggested that fiscal agents were not given sufficient written explanation of forms, procedures, or record-keeping requirements. Some type of training or communication seems warranted to help voucher and/or fiscal agents keep informed about the administration of the various programs.

Role of the Local Council: Planning Versus Administration. The Step Ahead process was initiated as a way to provide more local planning and decision-making. County coordinators have expressed concerns that with the increasing number of programs for which the local Step Ahead councils are responsible, councils are losing their Responses to the survey reinforce concerns expressed that the councils may have assumed too large of an administrative role to the detriment of planning. Local councils annually are required to submit all required state

planning focus. Responses from the coordinators to the LSA survey revealed that counties spend a significant amount of time on administrative activities such as writing a Request for Funding, oversight of the funding programs (e.g. monitoring and evaluating of programs), and reporting on the effectiveness of programs, and conducting of the council business to the various state agencies. Planning would be defined as the process to determine where funds will be spent and what types of programs to fund. Planning activities include determining (1) the issue or problem that exists, (2) the population that is to be served, (3) the funding need as well as a funding source, (4) the goals and objectives of the program, and (5) the performance measures to determine whether the program is successful.

Responses from coordinators centered on the increasing amount of paperwork and the short time lines in which to respond. The short time lines by FSSA, by its nature, mean there is less time for planning. In some counties, time spent on administrative tasks significantly reduced the amount of time available for planning. The INSIGHTS evaluation also found a need for more strategic planning at the local level.

Two questions were posed to local coordinators: (1) How would the coordinator characterize his or her council's division of work in terms of administrative versus planning? and (2) In the coordinator's opinion, what would be the most appropriate mix? The responses indicated that coordinators tend to believe that local councils should have more of a planning focus than they currently have. Exhibit 7 summarizes the responses of the coordinators to the survey questions.

Exhibit 7. Coordinators' Perceived and Preferred Mix of Council Activity		
Local Council's Division of Work	Perceived Mix	Preferred Mix
Almost all admin; Little planning	2.9%	0.0%
Mostly admin; Some planning	26.1%	8.7%
Half admin.; Half planning	46.4%	39.1%
Some admin.; Mostly planning	23.2%	46.4%
Little admin.; Almost all planning	1.4%	5.8%

grant applications plus applications for local funding. The following represents a sample of some of Wells County's application due dates:

Jan 16	First Steps Systems Coordination
Feb 27	First Steps System Point of Entry
Feb 27	CADA Teen Crisis Support
Feb 27	CADA Domestic Violence Victims
April 15	United Way Affiliate
April 30	Family Preservation and Support
May 1	Step Ahead Coordination
July 1	Child Care and Development Fund
July 1	School Age Care
July 1	Child Care Resource and Referral

Step Ahead councils are composed primarily of volunteers with limited time for community activity. The appropriate role of the local councils will need to be continually evaluated in terms of the impact on the workload imposed on a volunteer organization, as well as in terms of the desires and preferences of the local communities.

Overlap with Other Community Planning Efforts.

Some overlap exists between local Step Ahead councils and other local planning efforts. This overlap may be especially true with, but not limited to, Local Planning Councils involved with Indiana's welfare reform initiative. The problem with overlapping functions is (1) duplication of effort that might result in conflicting decisions; and (2) the potential overuse of volunteers (especially in smaller counties).

The missions and objectives of Local Planning Councils and Step Ahead councils are related, but only marginally. The objective of a Local Planning Council is to establish a plan that will help recipients of Title IV-A³ assistance adjust to changes in the TANF program and become more self-sufficient (IC 12-14-26-3). This objective includes (1) identifying the scope of needs and existing resources within the county; (2) recommending programs to be developed and resources to be expanded that will assist in providing necessary services within the county; and (3) compiling a list of public service work opportunities that may be available to enable all TANF recipients within the county to become self-sufficient (IC 12-14-22-13).

In contrast, the goals of Step Ahead tend more to the process of coordinating and collaborating to develop a delivery system for social services. In addition, the target populations are different for the two planning efforts, although somewhat related. The target population for Local Planning Councils is recipients of TANF assistance, which tends to be low-income, single-parent families. The target population for

Step Ahead is children aged 0-13. There is a relationship, however, in that Step Ahead councils have tended to focus on child care issues. Adequate and affordable child care is considered to be a major barrier to transitioning off of welfare.

The potential overuse of volunteers within a county may pose a more serious problem. The extent of this problem may be greater in smaller counties where the pool of volunteers is smaller. Not only is the membership of a Local Planning Council required to include at least one member of a Step Ahead council, but, often in smaller counties, individuals may have to serve on a number of different committees, boards, and councils. Local coordinators also described some local planning efforts, other than Local Planning Councils, that have similar missions as the Step Ahead Process and, certainly in the smaller counties, would involve overlapping membership of the volunteers. The INSIGHTS evaluation mentioned volunteer burnout as a threat to the Step Ahead process in five of seven counties studied. A possible solution to volunteer burnout include allowing local planning efforts such as Local Planning Councils and Step Ahead councils to combine.

Funding for the Step Ahead Process. Over the past two bienniums, the Step Ahead appropriation has increased, in total, from \$3.5 million in FY95 to about \$3.69 in FY98. This increase has gone primarily to pay for increased administrative costs at the state level. Additional administrative costs were mostly for salaries and fringe benefits. At the same time, the amount of funding to the local Step Ahead councils for planning/coordination and discretionary grants remained constant.

At the local level, some of the councils appear to be struggling to accomplish many of the tasks required by FSSA with part-time coordinators (only nine counties employ a full-time coordinator). Several of the local Step Ahead coordinators cited the reliance on part-time coordinators as a weakness of the Step Ahead process. Between September 1997 and March 1998, 20 counties hired new coordinators. While there may be a number of reasons for this high turnover, certainly "burnout" and low or limited salaries may be contributory factors.

³ The Title IV-A program is also known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); formerly Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

In addition, the Step Ahead councils use discretionary grants to provide direct services in their counties. The flat level of funding for discretionary grants, certainly over time due to inflationary pressures, will begin to reduce the scope of programs funded from this source.

Can Step Ahead Accomplishments Be Achieved By Other Means? While there are many success stories associated with the Step Ahead process, there is also considerable variation among the counties, both in their successes and also in their enthusiasm. This county by county variation is not unexpected due to local differences in (1) county coordinators, both in their abilities and length of tenure; (2) the ability of the various organizations and interest groups to work together; (3) the available resources within the county; and (4) the ability and industriousness of the volunteers, to name a few. However, the variability between counties is not necessarily inappropriate. Ninety-two different counties will have different needs, goals, and objectives.

There has been some discussion as to how services would be provided if a county no longer wanted to participate in the Step Ahead Process. If a county opted out, the decision as to where resources would be spent would be decided at either the state level at FSSA or, possibly, the local Office of Family and Children. If this occurred, while there still might be planning efforts undertaken, there certainly would not be the extensive needs analysis that currently occurs. While this study did not look at the role of the local Office of Family and Children, it could be assumed that the Office would be able to provide information to the various state offices as to the needs of the county.

Summary. Step Ahead is a process that has continually evolved since its inception in 1992. The local councils have become an important entity in providing local planning and decision-making. Success at the local level varies and depends to a large degree on the local coordinator and the council volunteers. Coordinators and the volunteer council members continue to work hard to provide those services that are believed to be most needed in their county.

At the state level, any continued success will depend on strong support at the highest levels of state government. The INSIGHT report cited the high level of administrative support as a strength of Step Ahead. This level of support is still needed for continued success of the Step Ahead process.

References

Andersen Consulting, Vision for the Future, 1990.

Family and Social Services Administration, Indiana Preschool Pilot Projects - A Guide of Participants in 1997-98, 1998.

Family and Social Services Administration, Indiana Collaboration Project: 5 Years of Progress, 1991-1996, 1997.

Family and Social Services Administration, Step Ahead: Indiana Collaboration Project, May 1995.

Indiana Legislative Services Agency, Issues Relating to the Cooperative Extension Service, July 1997.

Indiana Legislative Services Agency, Senior Citizens, the Disabled, and Children in Indiana: Evaluation Audit, 1990 and 1991.

INSIGHTS, Step Ahead: Evaluation Report, 1997.

Appendices

Appendix 1. State Step Ahead Panel, Membership Roster.

Member	Position and Affiliation
M. Emeline Rodway (Panel Chairperson)	Columbus, IN
Sharon Cochran	Department of Education Division of Special Education
Joyce Dix	Director Robertson Child Development Center East Chicago, IN
Alvanell Elkin	Teacher Fayette Central Elementary School Connorsville, IN
David Goldwater	Administrative Assistant Governor's Office
Susie Harmless	Director of Community Development Department of Commerce
Gren Lefebvre	Sommer Elementary School Crawfordsville, IN
Donna Marks	Department of Education Adult Education
Lauralee Martin	Deputy Director Bureau of Child Development Family and Social Services Administration
Connie Manous	Director of Special Education Franklin Elementary School East Chicago, IN
Geneva Shedd	Deputy Director Bureau of Aging and IN-Home Services Family and Social Services Administration
Peg Smith	Director American Camping Association Indianapolis, IN
Janet Corson	Acting Director Department of Mental Health Family and Social Services Administration
Dr. Marcia Summers	Professor Ball State University
Cheryl Miller	Director ICAP Headstart New Castle, IN
Gloria Webster-French	Director Office of Minority Health Indiana Department of Health
Source: Family and Social Services Administration	

Appendix 2. Step Ahead Membership Profile by County.

County	Date Recorded	Total Council Members	Child Care	City/ County Gov't	Education	Elected Officials	Area of Member's Expertise			
							Legal	Media/ Business	Medical	Non-Profit
Adams	Oct 96	44	5	5	15	-	-	-	6	9
Allen	NA	38	2	7	2	-	-	1	1	15
Bartholomew	Aug 96	55	3	11	5	-	-	6	3	17
Benton	Jun 96	24	2	6	3	-	2	-	3	7
Blackford	Dec 96	58	10	11	8	-	2	2	5	10
Boone	Dec 96	32	2	5	5	-	2	2	4	7
Brown	Dec 96	23	0	6	1	-	2	-	2	8
Carroll	Nov 96	22	1	7	5	1	-	1	1	4
Cass	Feb 96	59	6	8	7	1	4	1	7	13
Clark	Apr 96	61	6	10	7	-	5	2	10	14
Clay	Sep 96	39	1	10	4	1	-	-	4	11
Clinton	Dec 96	57	2	7	6	4	4	3	3	15
Crawford	Dec 96	36	1	10	6	-	1	-	3	8
Daviess	Sep 96	37	7	6	5	-	-	1	6	8
Dearborn	Sep 96	43	5	7	8	-	2	-	2	15
Dekalb	Dec 96	23	3	6	5	-	-	-	3	3
Decatur	May 96	31	1	5	2	1	1	1	3	11
Delaware	Dec 96	53	9	13	5	-	-	-	4	16
Dubois	Feb 96	38	1	4	4	1	3	10	2	7
Elkhart	Jun 96	101	17	16	25	1	2	1	7	28
Fayette	Jan 96	53	5	9	2	2	5	2	7	12
Floyd	Oct 96	39	4	11	3	-	-	1	2	13

Fountain	May 96	52	1	8	9	1	3	1	4	15
Franklin	Nov 96	16	0	4	3	-	-	-	3	5
Fulton	Aug 96	28	2	5	5	-	2	-	3	8
Gibson	Dec 96	22	4	5	3	-	-	1	3	2
Grant	Dec 96	25	4	7	1	-	1	1	1	8
Greene	NA	32	2	6	5	-	-	-	2	6
Hamilton	Sep 96	22	3	6	1	-	-	3	-	6
Hancock	Aug 96	29	4	4	4	-	1	-	4	7
Harrison	Dec 96	37	-	9	3	-	-	1	3	12
Hendricks	Oct 96	44	5	6	11	-	-	-	3	11
Henry	May 96	39	11	5	10	-	-	-	2	8
Howard	Dec 96	42	5	10	6	-	-	1	6	14
Huntington	Sep 96	28	1	8	1	-	-	3	3	8
Jasper	Dec 96	27	5	4	7	-	-	1	1	6
Jackson	Dec 96	28	4	10	3	-	-	-	1	9
Jay	Dec 96	29	3	6	3	-	-	1	2	8
Jefferson	Dec 96	21	1	4	4	-	-	-	3	5
Jennings	Dec 96	55	7	12	7	-	1	4	5	14
Johnson	Jan 96	42	1	8	9	1	2	-	3	11
Knox	Aug 96	87	1	14	10	1	2	3	12	24
Kosciusko	Nov 96	36	4	6	3	-	1	1	4	9
Lagrange	Feb 96	32	4	7	5	-	-	-	2	7
Lake	Jan 96	29	3	1	3	-	1	4	3	8
LaPorte	Mar 96	27	-	6	5	-	2	-	6	6
Lawrence	Sep 96	43	3	8	5	-	1	1	6	12
Madison	Dec 96	203	23	26	21	4	16	-	30	46
Marion	Sep 96	26	7	2	2	-	-	-	1	8
Marshall	Mar 96	24	1	6	4	-	-	1	1	6

Martin	Dec 96	17	1	6	3	-	1	-	1	4
Miami	Aug 96	45	3	15	4	-	-	-	3	10
Monroe	Nov 96	110	8	16	6	3	2	4	9	30
Montgomery	Jun 96	20	1	5	4	-	-	-	2	4
Morgan	NA	26	1	6	-	-	1	1	4	7
Newton	Dec 96	54	1	10	15	2	1	2	4	7
Noble	Sep 96	73	6	9	17	2	2	3	7	19
Ohio	Dec 96	10	1	3	-	-	-	-	2	3
Orange	Jul 96	24	3	3	10	-	1	-	3	3
Owen	Jan 96	29	2	6	3	-	-	1	1	7
Parke	Mar 96	33	11	7	4	-	-	-	-	9
Perry	Sep 96	16	1	3	2	1	-	-	1	6
Pike	Dec 96	30	5	7	1	-	-	-	7	5
Porter	Dec 96	56	7	8	8	1	2	2	8	14
Posey	Sep 96	20	3	6	2	-	-	-	2	5
Pulaski	Sep 96	15	1	5	1	-	-	-	2	5
Putnam	Aug 96	91	5	11	8	-	1	1	7	9
Randolph	Dec 96	28	7	8	1	-	-	-	2	6
Ripley	Sep 96	23	1	2	4	-	-	-	1	7
Rush	Sep 96	42	2	5	5	1	5	2	5	12
St. Joseph	Dec 96	34	4	5	2	-	-	3	2	7
Scott	Dec 96	19	2	5	3	-	-	-	1	6
Shelby	Dec 96	45	4	6	9	-	2	3	4	12
Spencer	Sep 96	13	1	3	2	-	-	-	-	6
Starke	Dec 96	11	1	5	1	-	1	2	-	-
Steuben	Dec 96	30	3	5	4	1	1	-	3	7
Sullivan	Oct 96	29	2	6	5	1	-	-	4	3

Switzerland	Jun 96	24	1	7	2	-	-	-	1	8
Tippecanoe	Dec 96	21	2	3	3	1	-	-	2	4
Tipton	Aug 96	25	1	5	6	1	-	-	4	4
Union	Dec 96	47	2	5	8	-	2	1	10	8
Vanderburgh	Aug 96	36	4	7	7	-	-	-	3	11
Vermillion	Jul 96	46	4	8	7	1	1	1	5	15
Vigo	Oct 96	84	8	13	10	1	3	1	8	22
Wabash	Sep 96	74	2	11	10	3	3	2	7	15
Warren	NA	63	3	7	6	4	2	2	5	17
Warrick	Jun 96	33	2	7	6	2	1	1	3	4
Washington	Dec 96	26	4	4	5	-	-	-	2	9
Wayne	Sep 96	38	1	5	9	2	-	1	5	12
Wells	Aug 96	31	3	4	3	-	-	-	5	12
White	NA	66	2	22	10	-	7	NA	6	15
Whitley	Feb 96	24	4	4	4	1	1	1	2	4
Total Statewide		3,672	332	671	506	47	108	95	358	913
Percent Statewide		100.0%	9.0%	18.3%	13.8%	1.3%	2.9%	2.6%	9.7%	24.9%

Appendix 3. Step Ahead Voucher Agents and Fiscal Agents by County.

County	Voucher Agents	Fiscal Agent
Adams	Community and Family Services, Inc.	Adams County Step Ahead, Inc.
Allen	Community Action of Northeast Indiana	Switchboard, Inc.
Bartholomew	Human Services, Inc.	United Way of Bartholomew County, Inc.
Benton	Community Action Program of Western Indiana	Community Action Program of Western Indiana
Blackford	Blackford County Step Ahead Council, Inc.	Blackford County Step Ahead Council, Inc.
Boone	Youth Action Community Council of Boone Co., Inc.	Youth Action Community Council of Boone Co., Inc.
Brown	Human Services, Inc.	Human Services, Inc.
Carroll	Area IV Agency on Aging and Community Services, Inc.	Area IV Agency on Aging and Community Services, Inc.
Cass	Area V Agency on Aging and Community Services, Inc.	Area V Agency on Aging and Community Services, Inc.
Clark	4C's Program of Louisville, Inc.	South Central Christian Children's Home, Inc.
Clay	4C's for the Wabash Valley, Inc.	Clay County First Steps/Step Ahead Council, Inc.
Clinton	Area IV Agency on Aging and Community Services, Inc.	Area IV Agency on Aging and Community Services, Inc.
Crawford	Lincoln Hills Development Corporation	Crawford County Extension Services
Davies	Wabash Valley Human Services, Inc.	Wabash Valley Human Services, Inc.
Dearborn	Southeastern Indiana Economic Opportunity Committee, Inc.	Purdue University Cooperative Extension
Decatur	River Valley Resources, Inc.	Decatur County Community Schools
Dekalb	Community Action of Northeast Indiana	Dekalb County Eastern Community Schools
Delaware	Muncie Community Schools Adult Education	A.C.T.I.O.N., Inc. of Delaware County
Dubois	Dubois-Pike-Warrick Economic Opportunity Committee, Inc.	Dubois-Pike-Warrick Economic Opportunity Committee, Inc.
Elkhart	Oaklawn Psychiatric Center, Inc.	ADEC, Inc.
Fayette	Landmark Services, Inc.	Fayette County School Corporation
Floyd	4C's Program of Louisville, Inc.	New Albany-Floyd County Consolidated Schools
Fountain	Community Action Program of Western Indiana	Community Action Program of Western Indiana
Franklin	Southeastern Indiana Economic Opportunity Corporation	Franklin County Step Ahead Council, Inc.

Fulton	Four County Counseling Center	Four County Counseling Center
Gibson	Gibson County Step Ahead Council, Inc.	Gibson County Step Ahead Council, Inc.
Grant	Family Services Society, Inc.	The Housing Authority of the City of Marion
Greene	Wabash Valley Human Services, Inc.	Wabash Valley Human Services, Inc.
Hamilton	Step Ahead of Hamilton County, Inc.	Step Ahead of Hamilton County, Inc.
Hancock	Interlocal Community Action Program, Inc.	Interlocal Community Action Program, Inc.
Harrison	Blue River Services, Inc.	Blue River Services, Inc.
Hendricks	Daybreak Management Corporation	Hendricks County Step Ahead/First Steps
Henry	Interlocal Community Action Program, Inc.	Henry County Step Ahead Council, Inc.
Howard	Area V Agency on Aging and Community Services, Inc.	Bona Vista Programs, Inc.
Huntington	Pathfinder Services, Inc.	Pathfinder Services, Inc.
Jackson	Child Care Network, Inc.	Child Care Network, Inc.
Jasper	Kankakee Valley Job Training Program, Inc.	Jasper County Step Ahead Council
Jay	Community and Family Services, Inc.	Community and Family Services, Inc.
Jefferson	Ohio Valley Opportunities, Inc.	Ohio Valley Opportunities, Inc.
Jennings	Jennings County Step Ahead Council, Inc.	Jennings County Step Ahead Council, Inc.
Johnson	Human Services, Inc.	United Way of Johnson County, Inc.
Knox	Wabash Valley Human Services, Inc.	Wabash Valley Human Services, Inc.
Kosciusko	Mental Health Association of Kosciusko County, Inc.	Step Ahead of Kosciusko County, Inc.
Lagrange	Community Action of Northeast Indiana	Lakeland School Corporation
Lake	Lake County Step Ahead Council, Corporation	Lake County Step Ahead Council, Corporation
LaPorte	LaPorte County Comprehensive Mental Health Council, Inc.	LaPorte County Comprehensive Mental Health Council, Inc.
Lawrence	Hoosier Uplands Economic Development	Maternal Child Health Center/WIC Dunn
Madison	Madison County Step Ahead Council, Inc.	Madison County Step Ahead Council, Inc.
Marion	Daybreak Management Corporation	Community Centers of Indianapolis, Inc.
Marshall	Marshall-Starke Development Center, Inc.	Marshall County Council on Aging, Inc.

Martin	Four River Resource Services, Inc.	Four River Resource Services, Inc.
Miami	Area V Agency on Aging and Community Services, Inc.	Area V Agency on Aging and Community
Monroe	City of Bloomington, Human Resources Department	Monroe County Step Ahead Council, Inc.
Montgomery	Community Action Program of Western Indiana	Community Action Program of Western In
Morgan	Child-Adult Resource Services, Inc.	Child-Adult Resource Services, Inc.
Newton	Newton County Step Ahead Council	Newton County Step Ahead Council
Noble	Community Action of Northeast Indiana	Dekalb County Parent Group for Handicap
Ohio	Southeastern Indiana Economic Opportunity Corporation	New Horizons Rehabilitation, Inc.
Orange	Orange County Child Care Cooperative, Inc.	Orange County Child Care Cooperative, In
Owen	4C's for the Wabash Valley, Inc.	Owen County Step Ahead Council
Parke	4C's for the Wabash Valley, Inc.	Community Action Program, Inc. of West
Perry	Lincoln Hills Development Corporation	Lincoln Hills Development Corporation
Pike	Dubois-Pike-Warrick Economic Opportunity Committee, Inc.	Pike County Caring for Children Council,
Porter	Youth Service Bureau of Porter County, Inc.	Youth Service Bureau of Porter County, In
Posey	Private Industry Council of Southwest Indiana, Inc.	Private Industry Council of Southwest Indi
Pulaski	Pulaski County Human Services, Inc.	Pulaski County Human Services, Inc.
Putnam	Western Indiana Employment and Training Services, Inc.	Putnam County Comprehensive Services,
Randolph	Community and Family Services, Inc.	Community and Family Services, Inc.
Ripley	Southeastern Indiana Economic Opportunity Corporation	Ripley County Family Services
Rush	Interlocal Community Action Program, Inc.	Shares, Inc.
St. Joseph	Workforce Development Services of Northern Indiana	Real Services, Inc.
Scott	Ohio Valley Opportunities, Inc.	Scott County Economic Development Cor
Shelby	Human Services, Inc.	Human Services, Inc./Shares
Spencer	Lincoln Hills Development Corporation	Lincoln Hills Development Corporation
Starke	RTC, Inc.	Starke County Development Foundation, I
Steuben	Community Action of Northeast Indiana	Metropolitan School District of Steuben C
Sullivan	Wabash Valley Human Services, Inc.	Wabash Valley Human Services, Inc.

Switzerland	Southeastern Indiana Economic Opportunity Corporation	Vevay-Switzerland County Foundation, Inc.
Tippecanoe	Tippecanoe County Child Care, Inc.	Community and Family Resource Center, Inc.
Tipton	Area V Agency on Aging and Community Services, Inc.	Area V Agency on Aging and Community Services, Inc.
Union	Community Care in Union County, Inc.	Community Care in Union County, Inc.
Vanderburgh	Philip Lieberman and Associates, Inc.	United Way of Southwestern Indiana, Inc.
Vermillion	Western Indiana Employment and Training Services, Inc.	Community Action Program, Inc. of Western Indiana
Vigo	4C's for the Wabash Valley, Inc.	4C's for the Wabash Valley, Inc.
Wabash	Area V Agency on Aging and Community Services, Inc.	Area V Agency on Aging and Community Services, Inc.
Warren	Community Action Program of Western Indiana	Community Action Program of Western Indiana
Warrick	Dubois-Pike-Warrick Economic Opportunity Committee, Inc.	Warrick County Step Ahead Council
Washington	Blue River Services, Inc.	Hoosier Uplands Economic Development
Wayne	Young Womens Christian Association of Richmond, Indiana	Wayne County Step Ahead
Wells	Community and Family Services, Inc.	United Way of Wells County, Inc.
White	White County Step Ahead, Inc.	White County Step Ahead, Inc.
Whitley	CANI, Inc.	Passages, Inc.
*** Shaded area indicates county where voucher agent and fiscal agent are the same entity.		

Appendix 4. Five-Year Budget History for Step Ahead, FY94-FY98.					
Year	Budget Category		Budget	Expenditures	Balance
FY94	Administration *		\$213,610	\$310,484	(\$96,874)
	Planning/Coord/Disc.	\$2,105,000			
	Schools	\$912,155			
	Other	<u>\$269,235</u>			
	Services		<u>\$3,286,390</u>	<u>\$2,042,107</u>	<u>\$1,244,283</u>
	Total		\$3,500,000	\$2,352,591	\$1,147,409
FY95	Administration *		\$213,610	\$395,720	(\$182,110)
	Planning/Coord/Disc.	\$2,327,192			
	Schools	\$775,333			
	Other	<u>\$183,865</u>			
	Services		<u>\$3,286,390</u>	<u>\$2,447,889</u>	<u>\$838,501</u>
	Total		\$3,500,000	\$2,843,609	\$656,391
FY96	Administration *		\$396,605	\$295,747	\$100,858
	Planning/Coord/Disc.	\$2,327,192			
	Schools	\$775,333			
	Other	<u>\$183,865</u>			
	Services		<u>\$3,286,390</u>	<u>\$3,063,745</u>	<u>\$222,645</u>
	Total		\$3,682,995	\$3,359,492	\$323,503
FY97	Administration *		\$396,605	\$394,022	\$2,583
	Planning/Coord/Disc.	\$2,327,192			
	Schools	\$775,333			
	Other	<u>\$183,865</u>			
	Services		<u>\$3,286,390</u>	<u>\$3,135,436</u>	<u>\$150,954</u>
	Total		\$3,682,995	\$3,529,459	\$153,536
FY98 **	Administration *		\$487,561	\$175,715	\$311,846
	Planning/Coord/Disc.	\$2,327,192			
	Schools	\$775,333			
	Other	<u>\$96,990</u>			
	Services		<u>\$3,199,515</u>	<u>\$2,848,446</u>	<u>\$351,069</u>
	Total		\$3,687,076	\$3,024,161	\$662,915
<p>* Administration includes items such as salaries, fringe, postage, printing, office supplies, office furniture, computer hardware and software, and travel. Administration also includes personal services contracts such as Kelly Temporary Services, The Asher Agency, The Center on Effective Services for Children, etc. some of the dollars used for personal services contracts came from "OTHER" in "SERVICES".</p> <p>** Revised expenditures are as of March 31, 1998.</p> <p>Source: FSSA</p>					

Appendix 5. Indiana Preschool Pilot Project Participants, 1997-98.

Grantee	County	Grant Amount
North Adams Community Schools	Adams	\$42,768
Elkhart Community Schools	Elkhart	39,505
Fayette County School Corp.	Fayette	67,273
New Albany-Floyd County Cons. Sch. Corp.	Floyd	51,042
Howard-Center Twp. Cons. School Corp.	Howard	55,405
Rensselaer Central School Corp.	Jasper	53,054
Jay School Corp.	Jay	23,745
Whitko Community School Corp.	Kosciusko	22,097
City of East Chicago Schools	Lake	39,393
Gary Community School Corp.	Lake	60,000
Michigan City Area Schools	LaPorte	56,094
Paoli School Corp.	Orange	30,617
Perry Central Community School Corp.	Perry	25,023
South Bend Community School Corp.	St. Joseph	50,725
Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corp.	Vanderburgh	33,312
Vigo County School Corp.	Vigo	40,703
Richmond Community Schools	Wayne	68,952
Smith-Green Community Schools	Whitley	16,768
Total		\$776,476

Appendix 6. Step Ahead Survey to Step Ahead Coordinators.

**** Responses indicated in bold print.**

(1) How many times per year does your full Step Ahead Council meet?

Our Council meets about _____ times per year.

3 times-1, 4 times-4, 6 times-5, 9 times-1, 10 times-7, 11 times-13, 12 times-36

(2) How well attended are your Council meetings by voting members?

[**0**] Council meetings are very poorly attended.

[**0**] Council meetings are somewhat poorly attended.

[**10**] About half of the members attend Council meetings.

[**19**] Council meetings are somewhat well attended.

[**38**] Council meetings are very well attended.

Comment:

(3) Please list your Step Ahead Council's primary goals in order of importance?

(A)

(B)

(C)

(D)

(4) Have the goals and policies of the State Step Ahead Panel been well articulated to you and your Step Ahead Council?

[**10**] The goals and policies of the State Step Ahead Panel have been very well articulated by the state.

[**42**] The goals and policies of the State Step Ahead Panel have been moderately well articulated by the state.

[**3**] Don't know.

[**12**] The goals and policies of the State Step Ahead Panel have been not well articulated by the state.

[**2**] The goals and policies of the State Step Ahead Panel have been very poorly articulated by the state.

Comment:

(5) (A) How would you describe the **usefulness** of the technical assistance that you have received from each of the following programs/offices in the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) in terms of the quality of the information and help that you received (either from information requests or from presentations and workshops)?

	Always Useful		Sometimes Useful		Never Useful		Had No Contact
Office of Community Planning	1 (12)	2 (29)	3 (19)	4 (3)	5 (0)	6 (4)	
Bureau of Child Development							
CCDF/Educare	1 (19)	2 (30)	3 (14)	4 (5)	5 (0)	6 (0)	
First Steps	1 (9)	2 (23)	3 (12)	4 (6)	5 (0)	6 (14)	
Contract Staff	1 (7)	2 (22)	3 (18)	4 (10)	5 (0)	6 (7)	
Family Preservation	1 (7)	2 (12)	3 (28)	4 (7)	5 (7)	6 (5)	
Overall Assessment	1 (5)	2 (30)	3 (25)	4 (2)	5 (0)	6 (1)	

Comment:

(B) When you requested technical assistance from FSSA, how would you describe the **timeliness** of the technical assistance that you have received?

	Always Timely		Sometimes Timely		Never Timely	Never Requested	
Office of Community Planning	1 (12)	2 (27)	3 (15)	4 (4)	5 (1)	6 (7)	
Bureau of Child Development							
CCDF/Educare	1 (21)	2 (30)	3 (11)	4 (3)	5 (1)	6 (0)	
First Steps	1 (9)	2 (21)	3 (12)	4 (4)	5 (0)	6 (1)	
Contract Staff	1 (11)	2 (21)	3 (11)	4 (6)	5 (5)	6 (9)	
Family Preservation	1 (9)	2 (19)	3 (15)	4 (7)	5 (7)	6 (7)	
Overall Assessment	1 (5)	2 (27)	3 (21)	4 (6)	5 (0)	6 (0)	

Comment:

(C) How many times did you contact FSSA staff for technical assistance in 1997? _____

Office of Community Planning _____ times in 1997

Bureau of Child Development

CCDF/Educare _____ times in 1997

First Steps _____ times in 1997

Contract Staff _____ times in 1997

Family Preservation _____ times in 1997

Comment:

(6) (A) How would you characterize your own Step Ahead Council's division of work activity?

- [2] Almost all administrative, very little planning activity
- [18] Mostly administrative, but some planning activity
- [32] About 50% administrative and about 50% planning activity
- [16] Some administrative, but mostly planning activity
- [1] Very little administrative, almost all planning activity

Comment:

(B) In your opinion, what would be the most appropriate mix of work activity for your Step Ahead Council?

- [0] Almost all administrative, very little planning activity
- [6] Mostly administrative, but some planning activity
- [27] About 50% administrative and about 50% planning activity
- [32] Some administrative, but mostly planning activity
- [4] Very little administrative, almost all planning activity

Comment:

(C) In your opinion, should the scope of Step Ahead (in terms of program areas) be expanded or narrowed?

- [22] The current scope of Step Ahead is too narrow and should be expanded.
- [35] The current scope of program areas is about right.
- [10] The current scope of Step Ahead is too broad now and should be narrowed.

(D) If you responded that the scope should be either expanded or narrowed, would you provide specific examples of programs or program areas that should be included in or excluded from the Council's scope.

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)

(7) How would you characterize the typical operation of your Step Ahead Council?

- [**20**] Almost all major issues are first considered by a committee.
- [**14**] Committees are used on the majority of issues.
- [**30**] Some issues are considered by committees while others are considered by the full Council.
- [**4**] Committees are used on less than half of the issues.
- [**1**] Committees are rarely used.

Comment:

(8) One of the benefits or goals often mentioned for the Step Ahead Process is that of finding or developing new funding sources at the local level.

(A) If this has occurred with your Council, could you provide some specific examples? (Please, provide as much detail as possible.)

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)

Comment:

(B) For each of the examples you described in Question #8(A), in your opinion, if the Step Ahead Council did not exist, would the funds or funding source still have been identified and for what purpose would those funds probably have been granted?

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)

Comment:

(9) One of the benefits or goals often mentioned for the Step Ahead Process is that of blending funding streams to accomplish local objectives. If this has occurred with your Council or you have observed this, could you provide some specific examples? (Please, provide as much detail as possible.)

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)

Comment:

(10) (A) Do you participate in regional Step Ahead meetings? (Check one)

- [**26**] I attend almost all regional meetings.
- [**14**] I attend most regional meetings.
- [**8**] I attend about half of the regional meetings.
- [**9**] I attend very few of the regional meetings.
- [**10**] I almost never attend the regional meetings.

Comment:

(B) What do you find to be most beneficial about the regional meetings?

	Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree	
	1	2	3	4	5
New state program information	(24)	(17)	(12)	(1)	(0)
State technical assistance	1 (16)	2 (17)	3 (20)	4 (2)	5 (0)
County Coordinator Group Problem Solving	1 (25)	2 (16)	3 (8)	4 (7)	5 (0)
New program initiatives developed by other local councils	1 (21)	2 (15)	3 (16)	4 (3)	5 (0)
Potential new funding sources (state, local, federal, or private)	1 (11)	2 (15)	3 (18)	4 (7)	5 (0)
I rarely learn anything new	1	2	3	4	5
Comment:	(1)	(0)	(10)	(13)	(24)

(C) Do you feel that regional or statewide meetings for voucher agents/fiscal agents would be useful?

[30] Voucher/fiscal agent meetings would definitely be very useful.

[15] Voucher/fiscal agent meetings would probably be useful.

[15] Don't know.

[5] Voucher/fiscal agent meetings would probably not be useful.

[1] Voucher/fiscal agent meetings would definitely not be useful.

Comment:

(11) Does your Council have mechanisms in place to determine whether service providers adequately meet the objectives for which they are contracted (such as periodic reviews, onsite visits, evaluation processes, reporting requirements, etc)?

(12) How would you grade the overall success of the Step Ahead Process **in your county** in meeting the goals intended for Step Ahead? (Circle one)

A+ A A- B+ B B- C+ C C- D+ D D- F
 (4) (11) (14) (18) (15) (1) (0) (0) (3) (0) (0) (0) (0)

Comment:

(13) (A) With your knowledge of the Step Ahead Process in your county, as well as Step Ahead Councils in other counties, what do you feel are the main **strengths** of the Step Ahead Process?

(a)

(b)

(c)

(B) With your knowledge of the Step Ahead Process in your county, as well as Step Ahead Councils in other counties, what do you feel are the main **weaknesses** of the Step Ahead Process?

(a)

(b)

(c)

(C) In your opinion, in what ways could the Step Ahead Process be improved?

(a)

(b)

(c)

(14) Do you have any additional comments that you would like to make regarding the successes, failures, benefits, or problems of the Step Ahead Process?

(15) The **name** of your county is _____

Appendix 7. Elkhart County Step Ahead

Consumer Comment and Appeals Policy
Approved March 25, 1997

Purpose:

To establish a local policy for parents or others involved in Step Ahead programs to raise general concerns about services being coordinated through Step Ahead.

Parameters of the local policy:

The local consumer comment and appeals policy is the default policy if applicable agency, state, or granting policies do not have specific consumer comment and appeals policies in effect. And, per state Step Ahead Policy (SA-94-2) on Consumer Comment and Appeals Policies, the policy:

...does not cover the procedures to be used by DFC in resolving child care licensing appeals, which are set out elsewhere in applicable Indiana statutes and regulations. Also, this policy does not cover procedures used by DFC in resolving disputes/complaints through the Early Intervention System for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities which are set out elsewhere in applicable federal statutes and regulations. Further, appeals may not be taken from decisions made by a local Step Ahead Council or fiscal agent regarding the awarding of contracts for services, provided procurement policies established by the Family and Social Services Administration have been followed.

Local Procedure:

1. The consumer disagrees with the STEP AHEAD Council of Elkhart County decision.
2. The consumer would communicate the concern or dissatisfaction to the Council Chairperson or STEP AHEAD Coordinator in writing or on an audio tape cassette.
3. The consumer shall be notified of the appeals procedures, in writing, at the time any adverse action is taken. This notice will include a copy of the Consumer Comment and Appeals Policy currently in effect.
4. The consumer shall be given the names, telephone numbers and addresses of necessary contacts. The names must include, but will not be limited to:
 - Chairperson of the STEP AHEAD Council of Elkhart County
 - President of the Coordinating agency for the STEP AHEAD Council of Elkhart County
 - Fiscal Agent for the STEP AHEAD Council of Elkhart County
 - Voucher Agent for the STEP AHEAD Council of Elkhart County
 - County Consultant representing the Bureau of Child Development and assigned to the STEP AHEAD Council of Elkhart County
 - Coordinator of the STEP AHEAD Council
 - any other person/position deemed relevant due to the nature of the initial appeal statement(s)
5. Local and informal resolution of issues will always be the preferred path of resolution to a disagreement. This can happen best with open communication, seeking shared understanding and mutual agreements.
6. Any disagreement that cannot be resolved directly by the parties involved will be appealed first to the STEP AHEAD Council of Elkhart County with a written appeal no later than ten (10) working days from the date of the presenting issue, denial of services, or termination of services.
7. The appeal will be reviewed by the Steering Committee, acting on behalf of the STEP AHEAD Council of Elkhart County, within ten (10) working days. The Steering Committee may extend the date when a decision is rendered by up to thirty (30) working days for the purpose of gathering additional information, seeking mediation for the affected parties, or to seek counsel. For this thirty (30) day extension to occur, the consumer making the initial appeal and the Chairperson of the Steering Committee would agree in writing to this extension.
8. If the appellant remains unsatisfied with the decision of the Steering Committee, he or she may register a written complaint with the State Step Ahead Panel by using the appropriate state form. It is the responsibility of the local STEP

AHEAD Coordinator to procure and give to the appellant the state form. The state will respond to the complaint in writing as defined in the current state Step Ahead Consumer Comment and Appeals Policy and the issue will stand as resolved.

9. At each level of the complaint process, the client may proceed immediately to the next level if no written response is received within the time frame specified at each level.